MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL, ACTIVISM, AND THE COMMITMENT TO PROGRESS IN INDUSTRIAL SACRIFICE ZONES: THE SOCIALIZATION OF CLASS IN WEST VIRGINIA

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation project analyzes tensions between class and rhetoric conflicts over coal in West Virginia, particularly contemporary conflicts over Mountaintop Removal (MTR) in the state. In it, I focus on how class animates rhetorics of resistance, identity, and control, (re)examining and recalibrating the relationship between rhetoric and class as vital to the construction of rhetorical theory on one hand and the contemporary salience of class on the other. Here, class broadly refers to the way populations are separated and stratified based on analytics and ideals of *value* (economic security and mobility being one), primarily articulated to align with teleological commitments to progress as they are defined alongside capitalism and deliberative democracy. Drawing from critiques of sociology, I forward what I call the socialization of class. The socialization of class is the long and deeply engrained process of making populations legible as classed or less inherently valuable. This process depends on varied iterations of class that rely on and enforce one another in the world-making process. As a result, I contend that class is always a rhetorical phenomenon, tangible because of and salient in the social (both material and abstract) is dynamics that have become normal in the contemporary world. In turn, I also contend that rhetoric, as both a field and a practice, has prominent and often unexamined classed dimensions and forward the socialization of class as a way of (re)examining the political tenors that undergird much of rhetorical theory.

Appalachian populations, and more specifically West Virginia and its people, have been historically juxtaposed to progress, cultivating material and ideological differences that are used to make Appalachian populations legible in the American imagination. Those differences both animate and are animated by practices, perceptual orientations, and rhetorical maneuvers. Consequently, to elucidate and recalibrate the relationship between rhetoric and class I explore the history of coal in West Virginia and its reliance on varied commitments to progress. Then, I analyze public discourses and events that engage MTR conflicts, focusing heavily on popular West Virginia newspaper articles, editorials, and letters to the editor between approximately 2006 and 2013. I attempt to pay particular attention to the way more contemporary rhetorical appeals are indebted to the history of creating a dependent culture in West Virginia, a conscious goal of the coal mining industry since just before the turn of the 20th Century. In addition to challenging implicit theoretical commitments to progress, the goal here is to formulate a heuristically valuable approach to class that helps make sense of the contemporary demands facing and opportunities available to activists in marginalized communities, particularly rural Appalachia.

For Sara, My Parents, and My Grandparents,

With all the Love I Can Muster

In Memory of My Grandfather and Friend, Bob Stephens

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CHAPTER 1

WEST VIRGINIA, COAL, AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF CLASS

Few locations on Earth are associated more widely and closely with a natural resource than West Virginia is associated with coal. For many West Virginians, coal was and is a way of life, the *only* way of life. It puts food on the table, keeps local energy prices low, and provides well-paying jobs in an otherwise bleak economic landscape. For others, coal represents a vicious economic cycle and environmental nightmare. It provides unreliable and unstable work, coats homes with poisonous black dust, and obliterates the state's signature mountains. For many residents, and for the state as a whole, coal is both of these dichotomous entities at once. Though West Virginia and its people cannot and should not be reduced to coal, its impact on the state is hard to overplay. The emergence of extreme mining tactics, primarily mountaintop removal (MTR), throws into relief the complexities of not only coal's place in West Virginia, but also more broadly, industrialism and resource extraction. Sociologist Ryan Wishart (2012) describes the ongoing conflict over MTR in the area as "a specific concrete case that reflects many essential relations of the crises of our social and ecological systems in general" (p. 473). Large-scale mining projects require land – and to a certain extent, people – that is effectively deemed disposable. Consequently, these projects, particularly MTR projects, shed light on how certain populations and places are (de)valued. With

increasing urgency, this lack of value is coming to the fore.

In recent years, coal conflicts have come to serve as a microcosm for the political dynamics at the intersection of political, economic, and environmental arenas. MTR has become the subject of an increasing number of documentaries such as *The Last Mountain* (Haney, 2011) and *Overburden* (Stevens, 2015), special journalistic investigations from the likes of the *Huffington Post* (Biggers, 2015a, 2015c, 2015d) and Al Jazeera America (Johnson, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c), and book-length scholarly projects from journalists (Shnayerson, 2008) as well as academics (Barry, 2012; Burns, 2005). This attention, and much of the antiMTR pressure it gravitates towards, comes as the coal industry's presence in West Virginia – and Appalachia more broadly – is declining, and opportunities for economic shifts in the state are on the brink of opening up (Biggers, 2015a, 2015b). As an industry, coal has waned significantly since 2008; along with it, MTR has declined. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), in 2008 over 50 mines had MTR permits in the Appalachian region and approximately 80% of those mines were in West Virginia. In 2014, there were just over 20 MTR-permitted mines. Even though the lion's share of those mines remained in The Mountain State (Arena, 2015), this decline has offered encouragement to those who are fighting to curb the environmental and cultural effects of surface mining.

Still, West Virginia's economic and cultural dependence on coal remains strong, reflecting the impact of coal on what it means to be from or to live in West Virginia. As of this writing, activists fight a coal industry that is on the ropes, but only relatively speaking. According to early EIA estimations, the Appalachia region was still set to produce just under 40 million tons of coal in 2015 and increase production to over 60

million tons in 2016 (Biggers, 2015c). Clearly, coal remains a vital part of West Virginia's economy and culture. In response, a new wave of Appalachian voices is giving life to a grassroots movement working against the expansion of MTR. As of July 2015, more than 200,000 people signed a petition urging Congress to enact a moratorium on MTR permits (Biggers, 2015d). Meanwhile, huge financial institutions such as Wells Fargo and JP Morgan Chase have pulled their support for the practice in the region (Bruggers, 2015). Banks started turning their backs on MTR as the coal industry came up against financial struggles in 2014 and the environmental devastation became increasingly hard to ignore (Collins, 2014). This underscores in some ways the growing importance of "environmental responsibility" in corporate image-making, a tool that has been and will continue to be used in the fight against large-scale surface mining projects. None of the opportunities and optimism of today would be possible without the swell of grassroots activism against MTR in the mid 2000s to the early 2010s. During this time, local communities became more active and more vocal in speaking out against MTR practices, particularly in West Virginia. Conversely, coal companies were more aggressive and many locals became more impassioned in their defense of the industry and its place in the state. The result was a dramatic increase in MTR conflicts and discourses in West Virginia, conflicts and discourses that reflect the devaluation of particular people and places in compelling ways.

AntiMTR activists, journalists, scholars, and otherwise concerned citizens at this time raised questions about why quality of life in coal country was worth so little, why MTR was allowed to continue despite what it was doing to the communities that surrounded the mines. Fundamentally, these people were raising questions about class

and why the never-ending march of progress in America did not seem to include them. Class is not merely a matter of economic stratification or stereotypes. Rather, it more broadly includes the mutually dependent ways populations are separated and stratified based on a particular analytic of *value,* or who/what is considered to be worthy of protecting, nurturing, and holding as a model for living in the contemporary world. This project seeks to make sense of this notion of *class* as it ebbs and flows through the abovementioned spike in MTR conflicts and discourses. Here, I focus on the rhetorical dimensions of class; that is, the way class is enforced and maintained in rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control with regard to MTR. As will be elaborated on throughout the project, there are many manifestations of class, many ways that a devalued population knows and feels their trivialization. On the other hand, there are many ways that more valued populations know and feel their worth and prestige. Be it economic status/mobility, environmental/occupational risks, stereotypes, or access to political decision-making, value and class take many forms.

Contemporary ideals of and commitments to *progress* as it is defined alongside commitments to democracy and capitalism ground this analytic of value, both in material manifestations and social salience, and hold these forms of class together in the contemporary world.[1] Whatever vague buzzword is used to describe the abstract organization of economic, political, and cultural trajectories (be it democracy, neoliberalism, industrial capitalism, or any number of others), a teleological commitment to a specific manifestation of *progress* has become essential to the formation and

[1] Progress is an abstraction that can be defined in a variety of ways. Unless otherwise noted, when I use the term progress I am speaking of a very specific and hegemonic articulation of progress that has been defined through associations with deliberative democracy and industrial capitalism.

maintenance of certain types of world-making in the 21st century. The political and economic order of the world strives in many ways to reinforce itself both materially and ideologically. Alain Badiou (2012) puts this succinctly when he claims,

> Under the interchangeable rubrics of 'modernization', 'reform', 'democracy', 'the West', 'the international community', 'globalization' and various others, we find nothing but an historical attempt at unprecedented regression, intended upon creating a situation in which the development of globalized capitalism, and the action of its political servants, conforms to the norms of their birth. (pp. 4-5)

Contemporary ways of organizing and understanding the world today depend almost fundamentally upon a distribution of values and measures of worth that are actively maintained in the day-to-day and institutional practices that are often taken for granted.

Progress is the abstract term that encompasses all that supports the continuation of dominant political, economic, and social models, and according to Ronald Eller (2008), "At least since the late nineteenth century, we have associated progress toward the attainment of a better society with measures of industrial production, urbanization, consumption, technology, and the adoption of modern education and cultural values" (p. 1). As a result of this association, class has become an analytic of value formed in the articulation[2] of bodies, discourses, practices, and objects as they are made legible in relation to these ideals and commitments to progress.

This notion of progress, however, is not neutral, but has been carefully crafted and achieved over time in juxtaposition to particular populations and practices. It has been crafted not consciously, but through orientations and associations that have become commonplace and important over time, particularly as they relate to the privileging of industrial capitalism and deliberative democracy. The overwhelming domination of

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[2] For a detailed discussion of articulation theory, see Lacau and Mouff (1985, 1987) and DeLuca (1999).

industrial capitalism, particularly since the 1940s, has created practices and experiences that necessitate the devaluation of certain populations and lands (Foster, Clark, & York, 2010; Jensen & McBay, 2009), asserting the cultural legibility of what progress looks like against these populations. Appalachia has been central to this process, helping define progress as its antithesis. Appalachians have been used for generations to frame what *we are* as Americans and what *we* categorically *are not* (Eller, 1982, 2008). For its part, the unquestioned good of deliberative democracy saturates political and academic discourses. It has galvanized populations to war and – as will be discussed below – has been crucial to the shaping of political philosophy and ethics in the West. In turn, it is vital to the articulation of progress in the contemporary world. The way class has been achieved over time in relation to progress vitalizes rhetorical practices of identity, resistance, and control, creating complex obstacles for marginalized (here, working- and lower-classed) communities invested in social or political change. Class position does not only affect the way populations rhetorically engage one another and the world. Such rhetorical engagement and the explicitly economic conditions of class are born from the same process of defining progress. In turn, I am not referring here to how class becomes a theme in particular rhetorics of resistance and control, but to the way class is sutured to how arguments are constructed and find validity. Simultaneously, rhetorical theory – in its long and storied commitment to democratic ideals – has mirrored the political commitments to contemporary articulations of progress. In turn, an analysis emphasizing the tensions between progress and class in rhetoric also necessarily challenges some of the political underpinnings of rhetorical theory more broadly.

West Virginia and the fight over MTR put these complexities of class on full

display. West Virginia is part of the larger Appalachian region of the United States, a region with a rich history of being caricatured while taking the brunt of economic and environmental exploitation. While Appalachia has been grossly homogenized, even in some Appalachian scholarship, particularly before the mid 1990s (D. B. Billings, Norman, & Ledford, 2000), many stereotypes and patterns of economic exploitation in the region share an explicit relationship with the ideals and commitments being questioned here. These populations suffer class manifestations in a variety of ways, from well-known stereotypes to economic hardships to environmental risks. Mining communities particularly constitute what many have called *sacrifice zones,* locations that have been set on a course of destruction so as to maintain the economic and cultural growth capitalism demands (Austin & Clark, 2012; Fox, 1999). These locations are sometimes called peripheral zones or internal colonies, because the people, resources, cultures, and environments that inhabit these locations are unequivocally devalued. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, pejorative stereotypes about Appalachians grew up alongside the establishment of the region as a sacrifice zone for resource extraction industries, particularly coal. This makes West Virginia a compelling starting point for approaching the relationship between class as a complex analytic of value and rhetoric, particularly as it relates to identity, resistance, and control.

To address the arguments laid out here, this introductory chapter will proceed in two primary stages. First, a discussion and theorization of class and progress lays the groundwork for (re)examining the relationship between class and rhetoric in practice and in theory. The ideal of progress maps out presumed goods, such as deliberation, industrialism, democracy, and civility. As such, it also provides anchors for political,

social, and cultural judgment. Diversions from the behaviors, discourses, aesthetics, and performances strongly associated with ideals of progress are, in theory and practice, devalued in a way that comes with a strong justification for exclusion and dismissal. Violence serves as a prime example of this type of behavior and discourse. In this project violence becomes a way of challenging the politics of progress. This section illustrates not only how class and rhetoric are related, but also why this relationship is fundamental to an analysis of contemporary conflicts, particularly those in Appalachia. Next, a discussion of MTR and its consequences demonstrates the urgency with which activists in West Virginia must overcome the types of class distinctions in question, in order to face this threat to the state and its people. This section begins to lay out the inequalities that serve as manifestations of class, as well as why these inequalities warrant rhetorical attention to class. Former coal titan Massey Energy and grassroots mainstay Coal River Mountain Watch are the primary, but not sole, focus of this project. Each sharply reflects more widespread patterns of control and resistance in the region.

Rhetoric, Class, and Progress

Communication studies, perhaps obviously, has long been a field striving to grapple with the myriad ways human and nonhuman communication works. According to John Peters (2001), "Though humans were anciently dubbed the 'speaking animal' by Aristotle, only since the late nineteenth century have we defined ourselves in terms of our ability to communicate with one another" (p. 1). As a result, questions of communication became central to the human condition in the 20th century. From the evolution of political theory to advances in technology, communication — specifically the way it

changes and what that means — has become an increasingly important object of interest. Popular and academic questions of communication have often reflected political, cultural, and social ebbs and flows.[3] In the contemporary world, this means communication theory is directly and indirectly engaged with the commitments of deliberative democracy and progress as they are articulated in the climate of global capitalism. This, more often than not, plays upon what Scott Welsh (2002) calls the "dialogue metaphor for understanding what collectivities do together in public deliberation" (p. 679), one that is problematic when accounting for diversity in political voices. That is, deliberation is conceptualized through the prism of dialogue, and what constitutes *civil* dialogue in turn is central to democratic legitimacy.

Rhetoric has been perhaps the discipline (or sub-discipline) most invested in the relationship between communication and democratic politics. Rhetoric is understood in a variety of different ways, so what constitutes *rhetoric* or the object of rhetorical analysis is always changing. Teleologically though, at its core, rhetoric is a discipline that places its object of study (broadly: communicative world-making) at the heart of democratic engagement, conceptualized far beyond the bounds of official political contexts and institutions. The history of rhetoric as a field and a concept mirrors and runs parallel to developments in the political philosophy of democracy and the ideals of progress that have accompanied it, particularly in America. While contemporary rhetorical theory is far from homogeneous, as it is made up of scholars from varied backgrounds with a menagerie of commitments, much of the field is bound by often implicit obligations to

[3] For a complete treatment of the history of communication as a concept, see Peters' (2001) foundational work that addresses the ebbs and flows of communication as a discipline and interdisciplinary question.

deliberative democracy, civility, and *progress*. Even sophisticated critical works that have become central to rhetoric and its many auxiliary disciplines depend heavily on both democratic ideals and the particular notions of progress that complement those ideals.[4] To this end, Gerard Hauser (1999) contends that at the turn of the century,

> A conception of rhetoric predicated on assumptions of civic virtues continues today in both our valorizing of rational deliberation and our scholarship centering on institutional rhetors (elected officials for the most part) and institutional discourses (messages on issues to be decided by elected representatives). (p. 20)

Hauser forwarded this as a problem for the idea of rhetoric, a disconnect between the academic discipline and the interactive world it is meant to study and reflect. He questioned what constituted the object of analysis, not the politics of the commitment itself. As a result, even in its shift away from focusing so heavily on political speeches and institutions, rhetoric remained deeply indebted to a contemporary democratic ideal of progress and the inherent good of civil, deliberative democracy.

Simultaneously, commitments to democracy have come with aversions to sustained treatments of class dating back to its Aristotelian origins (DeGenaro, 2007). Rhetoric has struggled to develop a lexicon for effectively grappling with class politics (Aune, 1994), a struggle that reflects broader cultural vocabularies and mythologies that devalue bodily work, the sort working-class populations often take part in, and the cognitive processes it cultivates (Rose, 2005). Because rhetorical theory is teleologically

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[4] Take, for example, the following influential works on history and rhetoric: Celeste Condit's *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change* and Susan Zaeske's *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity*. In each, the author skillfully moves through historical cases, illuminating the rhetorical maneuvers used in a particular social controversy and the theoretical insights gleaned from them. Each also implicitly depends upon a notion of progress and commitment to democratic ideals of voice that is ultimately achieved via rhetorics of social change.

invested in the ideals of deliberative democracy and progress, the aversion of class is not a simple matter of exclusion or institutional blind spots, but reflects how class is culturally and politically sutured to the mutually enforced ideals of deliberative democracy, capitalism, and progress.

The symbiotic relationship between intellectual traditions, such as rhetoric, and the "real world" of politics and culture come into focus in the implicit tension between Marxism and theories on publics over the claim to class scholarship in rhetoric, particularly in America. Class politics is often dismissed as (neo)Marxism or communism in American political discourse; rhetoric reflects this aversion in the more comprehensive adoption of thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and John Dewey over Karl Marx, particularly when it comes to issues of class. While Marxists certainly find their way into rhetoric, their battle for a place at the rhetorical table is an uphill one.[5] As recently as 2006, Lee Artz, Steve Macek, and Dana Cloud published a collected volume attempting to (re)introduce Marxism to communication theory. According to the editors' introduction,

> Marxism's relationship to communication as a discipline has long been marked by profound ambivalence. As in other disciplines, scholars and students in communication approach existing knowledge under conditions not of their own making. While notions derived from Marxist theory – ideology, hegemony, reification, commodification, social class, dialectics, cultural imperialism, and so on – are regularly deployed in the pages of communication journals and are foundational to entire subfields…. Many accounts of these theoretical and methodological perspectives ironically obscure their own Marxist roots, seeking in particular to put distance between them and any hint of materialism or

[5] See, for example, Cloud's (1994, 1999) early work on tensions between rhetoric and materiality. Despite the important contributions of these essays, Cloud struggled to account for experiential dynamics of class and class-consciousness while forwarding a notion of rhetoric that resonated dominant trends in the field. Consequently, in many ways these essays have become canonical exceptions to more widely embraced trajectories in the field.

recognition of class conflict. (pp. 1-2)

The ambivalence toward Marxism, and with it class conflict, is not coincidental, but it is not exactly conscious or intentional either. It is the product of the disciplinary and political, ideological aversion to class conflict as it is associated with particular — often considered failed — political movements. Marxism is associated with political and teleological commitments that are perceived as *undemocratic* and in turn *antirhetorical*. The point is not that Marxism should be reclaimed here, as this is not a Marxist project, but that the disciplinary aversion to Marxism in favor of other ways of organizing the relationship between communication and politics is a symptom of the sway commitments to progress as articulated with regard to deliberative democracy have on political thought and, in turn, rhetorical theory.

Marxism's explicit focus on class, particularly in the form of class-consciousness, typically gives way to notions of public and publicity when it comes to rhetorical and political treatments of class. The idea of a public has been debated for generations. One of the earliest influential accounts of the public came from John Dewey. Robert Asen (2003a) calls on Dewey to finesse the rhetorical approach to the public, in part because Dewey's definition of democracy "highlighted the indispensable role of publics in establishing and sustaining democracies" (p.174). As recently as 2014, Brian Jackson and Gregory Clark (2014) explain that Dewey is a compelling rhetorical influence for the same reasons he gained popularity as an American political thinker in the 1990s: his focus on developing a sophisticated theory of democratic morality. For example, according to Jackson and Clark, Dewey's "idea of trained capacities is capacious enough to cover everything that makes rhetoric morally essential to democracy" (p. 7). These

uses of Dewey explicate a moral commitment to democracy and what constitutes progress within it, particularly in the American rhetorical tradition.

The most significant brand of public/public sphere scholarship as far as rhetoric is concerned – perhaps to its detriment (Asen, 2003a; Goodnight & Hingstman, 1997; Ono, 2003) – was actually born from the intellectual trajectory of Marxism and highlights the deep-seeded influence of industrial and global capitalism on intellectual and political notions of democracy and progress. One of the most influential offshoots of the Marxist tradition was the Frankfurt School. The Frankfurt School attempted to account for Marxist critiques, along with a number of other intellectual traditions, as a way of responding to the evolutions of capitalism. Global economic and political commitments to capitalism were driving intellectual innovation, both as far as critique and in terms of how democracy was being engaged and manifested around the world. Thus, while the Frankfurt School was to varying degrees indebted to Marxism, much of its scholarly output was heavily tied up in addressing the global spread of democracy and capitalism.

Jürgen Habermas became the school's leading intellectual on the matter of publics. The theoretical breadth of Habermas' work is vast, but it is his writings on the public sphere that have sparked important work on the dynamics between progress, class, and rhetoric. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in German in 1962, Habermas (1989) forwards the ideal of a *public sphere*, a place where ideas could be shared openly in the pursuit of consensus building and political world-making. It was, even in its earliest forms, an unrealizable ideal developed to make sense of a cultural shift brought on by new forms of media and the rise of new social spaces, as a result of globalization and industrial capitalism. Even still, the public sphere became a

powerful and highly contested tool used to approach democratic theory through communication in the form of argumentation, context, and identity. Habermas' work sparked a spirited debate over publics and publicity in Germany.[6] These debates were slow to be translated into English and in any meaningful way combined with the American intellectual tradition on publics (see Hansen, 1993) primarily beholden to Dewey.

Still, contemporary rhetorical theory remains heavily indebted to the Habermasian model. However, today's concerns in rhetoric echo debates that predate Habermas' work as well as many of those that followed more directly in his wake. This is particularly true in forwarding multiple and permeable publics as a way of dealing with and accounting for institutional and vernacular democracy as it thrives in the 21st century (Asen & Brouwer, 2001; Brouwer & Asen, 2010; Hauser, 1999). Rhetorical scholarship inspired by public/public sphere theory, typically drawing from Habermas and to a lesser extent Dewey, is one of the two major trajectories in rhetoric that deal explicitly with class. Scholars such as Robert Asen (1996, 2001, 2003b), Cara Finnegan (2003), and David Zarefsky (1977, 1986) emerged from this tradition each to discuss at length the complex relationship between class and communication. However, these projects are *about* public deliberation and mediation as they relate to publics, perpetuating the moral commitment to democracy and gainsaying attention to how that commitment enforces class distinctions.

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[6] For example, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993) – a German sociologist and a German filmmaker, respectively – responded with an extended critique of the mechanisms of public life and the exploration of evolving media technologies as they affect and are affected by the public or publics.

The Socialization of Class

Even still, rhetoric is keenly suited for discussing the complexity of class in the world today for the exact reason it has been averse to class in the first place; rhetoric is indebted to the commitments and a sense of morality that have been constructed alongside and juxtaposed to devalued populations. Teleological commitments to deliberative democracy and civility have been articulated such that progress is ingrained in material development, and this has been the case since before the turn of the 20th century (Marafiote, 2008). As a result, the material and cultural distinctions of class appear natural, even more so as they are made legible and meaningful in the very act (or lack thereof) of rhetorical engagement. This means that class is a rhetorical phenomenon and in turn it means rhetoric is a classed phenomenon.

I propose here a rhetorical approach that focuses on the way class stratification – in its many forms – is manifested, manipulated, resisted, and enforced communicatively, focusing on how class and rhetoric are interwoven. To this end, I approach class through what I call the *socialization of class*, the suturing of class as an analytic of value to the legibility of populations both locally and in broader contexts, as well as to how populations engage in rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control that resonate with the way populations have been devalued over time. Of course, people and populations are socialized in a variety of ways. From gender to race to caste to sexual orientation, populations are divided and stratified on a multitude of supposed grounds. However, class is a judicious choice here for two reasons. First, class distinctions are perhaps the most pervasive in the MTR conflicts in question and in turn provide the clearest insights into those conflicts as rhetorical phenomena. Second, the socialization process here is

fundamentally sutured to the development of industrial capitalism, its need for working- and lower-class populations, and its influence on deliberative democracy and the ideal progress.

Socialization has long been an important concept in psychology and sociology, used to refer to the way individuals are trained to understand norms and meaning in a given culture, and how one *obtains* the tools for interactive life. Here the socialization of class refers to the way value is achieved and maintained as part of the process of rhetorically creating and maintaining norms in the contemporary *democratic* and *industrialized* world. Value is normalized in the way populations are devalued through political decisions, income distribution, media representations, living conditions, and various other manifestations of class, all of which are rhetorical insofar as they contribute to the distribution of standards and values that inform decision making.[7] Value is socialized when it saturates the legibility of the population and even breathes life into the rhetorical terrain where it operates. This is because conditions help shape the *forms of life* that are functional in a given context as well as how those forms of life vary in salience across time and space. Linda Alcoff, echoing Ludwig Wittgenstein, uses the phrase *forms of life* to refer to "a complex, interrelated network of practices and perceptual orientations within which we navigate the world and function. And there certainly exists more than one possible, and functional, form of life" (Alcoff, 2006, p. 97). Here, I adopt and use the phrase to refer to the way rhetorical choices are grounded in contextual experiences that are also entrenched in various manifestations of class stratification.

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[7] I am following Ronald Greene's discussions of materialist rhetoric (1998) and rhetorical materialism (2009) as guides for defining and demarcating what constitutes rhetoric.

Of course, all class is socialized under this definition. Middle and upper-class populations are most certainly articulated as more valuable as they align with intelligible articulations of progress. However, sociologist Beverley Skeggs (1997) suggests that class is always mediated through notions of respectability, which is normative in that, usually, only groups that *do not have* respectability notice it as an interlocutor of stratification and value. That is, middle and upper-class populations are *socialized* as normal, often blind to their own class privilege and identity. In turn, working- and lower-class populations disproportionately feel the sting of the socialization process. This does not attend only to the way particular populations become the butt of jokes, but also to the way self-identification, rationales, and rhetorical patterns are cultivated. Local identifications and rationales are woven into broader analytics of value because the prevailing articulation of progress is built on the backs of classed populations. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) famously penned the idea that class was a matter of distinction largely manifested in tastes, distinguishing the cultural pleasures of one class from another, and that mediations of these cultural manifestations have historically been used to moralize and, more importantly, demoralize certain populations. According to Skeggs (2004), these distinctions of value and legitimacy vitalize vocabularies – the way populations are trained to talk about classed groups – that make it easy to mediate and understand class.

The acting out and communicating of a given form of life cannot easily be altered to avoid being devalued. According to Alcoff (2006), "the structures of our rational activity operate within and through systems of metaphors that arise out of our embodied experience" (p. 104) and "lack of consciousness about the strength and ubiquity of these conceptual metaphors, and their correlations with embodied experience, means that

conceptual change is very difficult" (p.105). That is, what is rational, acceptable, or correct in a given context is the product of a history of training the body and mind to understand the world and relations through certain codes and practices. These codes and practices, when they are used to navigate the world, constitute the forms of life discussed here. When a population's form of life is rhetorically positioned as inferior based on *normalized* notions of what is prudent or acceptable in a given context, this reflects what Maria Lugones (2003) calls *arrogant perception.* In such cases, the population with greater mobility and more rhetorical space can and will dictate the terms of legitimacy. Such is often the case in academic and popular discourses as populations (often marginalized) are translated into vocabularies that make sense of their condition and their actions. This – as will be discussed through this project – has been the case with Appalachian populations.

The application of arrogance as a practical and theoretical analytic for understanding and organizing populations is well known under a variety of different names. Middle- and upper-class populations are trained to use arrogant perception when engaging and interpreting working and lower classes. As Diane Kendall (2014) puts it, "all classes, from the highest to the lowest are constantly being socially reproduced" (p. 98), but middle- and upper-class populations primarily carry out the social reproduction of class. Kendall's research demonstrates how class is socialized from a very young age through parenting and public education practices that separate populations based on material inequities, and teach separation as a matter of value. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's (2003) work establishes how class has become a point of shame for many, particularly poor rural Whites, who benefit from White-dominated political order, but remain unable

to achieve economic mobility. Linda Alcoff has spoken extensively on the dangers of *speaking for others*, the political dynamics embedded in using vocabularies to describe the experiences of others that are not derived from those experiences (Alcoff, 1991). Originally published in the early 1980s and now foundational to many postcolonial and feminist trajectories of thought, Gayatri Spivak (1994) famously challenged oppressed populations' lack of unmediated access to supposedly *legitimate* or *correct* forms of resistance. Spivak asserted that under the socialization brought on by capitalism in the modern world, the subaltern cannot speak, referring to the built-in delegitimization of subordinated and oppressed groups. In rhetoric, Kent Ono and John Sloop recognize the institutional boundaries that exclude the rhetorics of marginalized groups, encouraging attention to what they call out-law (Sloop & Ono, 1997) and vernacular (Ono & Sloop, 1995) discourses.

These class distinctions in legitimacy are built into the culture's habits and languages that prize deliberative democracy, and they are never far removed from the economic conditions that they are more colloquially associated with regard to class. However, they are also internalized. Poverty is a source of shame for many in America, particularly White Americans who are the benefactors of systemic racism in the country (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2003). The way class is manifested as a form of mediated value can affect the way value is internalized. This approach to class – linking it to taste, legitimacy, and shame – throws into relief the relationship between financial security/mobility and dynamics between cultures. Within contemporary articulations of progress, certain populations lack legitimacy in the broader cultural marketplace. The politics of the moral commitment to democracy and progress consequently cuts both

ways. A certain level of devotion to deliberative democracy and associated ideals of progress is admirable, valuable, and perhaps even necessary for the justification and survival of academic departments. It certainly comes from a well-meaning place. However, it provides a challenging yet necessary place to question and explore the politics of democracy and progress as it relates to devaluing certain populations and creating institutional, discursive, and ideological hurdles to meaningful change in their conditions. These commitments are indebted to the tradition and history of capitalism that define progress as juxtaposed to particular populations.

Varied populations around the world have been obliterated, disadvantaged, and/or rendered less valuable as a result of the way progress is articulated in the contemporary world. Among them are Appalachian populations. Appalachian scholars have known for decades that poor populations in the region have been sold as the antithesis of the *American Dream* and progress in America. Even the term "Appalachia" is in some ways a social fabrication, "designed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to satisfy those who sought to integrate mountain society into the 'civilized' mainstream American life" (Crawford, 1990, p. 5). Extending this approach to class with a rhetorical focus draws attention to the manifestations of class in rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control, and it parses out how class is a varied and layered rhetorical phenomenon. Appalachia provides a focused opportunity to explore the tensions between class and rhetoric as they relate to the structures of democracy and capitalism, because the rhetorics of controversy in the area remain heavily and obviously sutured to the history of industrialization in the region.

Appalachia and Class

The cultural resources available to Appalachian populations have a complex relationship with the region's history, political dynamics, and the ability for localized resistance against oppression. As Appalachian historian Stephen L. Fisher (2000) puts it:

> … cultural traditions are at the heart of the community networks necessary to sustain people during protracted struggles and enable them to foster change on their own terms… neither class nor culture alone is a sufficient tool for understanding political action in Appalachia. Although classes are shaped by economic concerns they are cultural configurations. Indeed, the United States is one of the few places where class and culture are thought of separately. Lived experience is different – our lives are a messy amalgam of identity out of which social relations are conducted. The difficult, but critical task is not to decide between culture and class, but to discover how class, race, and gender conflicts express themselves today in cultural and political formations. (pp. 208 – 209)

That is, the lived experience of class is simultaneously cultural and political in a way that influences identity, expression, and rhetorical choices.

Appalachian Studies scholarship approaches the explicitly economic dimension of class as it is articulated with other forms of organizing, dividing, and stratifying populations. This includes, but is not limited to, the relationship between gender and class-consciousness and conversely the relationship between class and gender consciousness (Barry, 2008, 2012; Maggard, 1987, 1994), tensions between religion and activism among working class Appalachians (Billings, 1990), and historical dynamics between class and race in Appalachia and the Appalachian South (Trotter, 1990; Wray, 2006). In each case, the political and cultural manifestations of class are not distinct; rather, they are one in the same in light of how *progress* negatively animates the achievement of lower- and working-class populations over time. Consequently, drawing from this literature, the following chapter reveals the way progress is woven into West Virginia's history with coal and in turn the rhetorical conflicts over coal in the state and

the region.

Appalachia has been, to varying degrees, mediated and devalued for more than 100 years. This is best represented in the figure of the "Appalachian Hillbilly", a popular caricature in American culture that congealed over time into a foil for the mobile middle class. The caricature and stereotypes associated with it are the product of distinctions in taste and respectability. Despite this caricature's earlier popularity, its resonance remained diverse and dynamic until after the Great Depression. The term itself originated around 1900 at approximately the same time the first real wave of journalistic and economic interest grew with regard to Appalachia. This backwards icon would first solidify into a patronizing *positive* caricature in American popular culture. Through the 1920s and into the early 1930s, the *hillbillies* of Appalachia came to be valued as *pure* Protestant American people, often juxtaposed to the many immigrant populations entering the country. Many rural musicians, for example, gained prominence with the rise of the phonograph and radio broadcasting in the early 1920s. What would over time congeal into the country music genre was first "nearly universally known as 'hillbilly music'" (Harkins, 2004, p. 71). Musicians such as Fiddlin' John Carson became popular, marketable performers and were labeled in a variety of ways, *hillbillies* being one of the labels that gained momentum into the 1930s. According to Harkins (2004), *hillbilly music's*

> social meaning was also hotly contested by those inside the country music "subculture" who performed and listened to the music and the promoters, producers, and journalists who represented outside commercial interests. Many in the latter group used the term to disparage both what they deemed a base and formulaic genre and the culture from which it developed. Musicians and their audiences on the other hand, held a more complex view. While recognizing the term's derisive connotation, they also warily adopted the label as a marker of personal and cultural pride that reflected their sense of divided identity between a

rural past and the industrial present. (pp. 71-72)

The tension between the term's popular legibility and its resonance with those being associated with it was and continues to be complex. It is a discursive and cultural way of representing the pros and cons of rejecting or resisting the march of progress in America. Social and religious reformers highlighted the rugged individualism and traditional ways of life associated with the Appalachian working and lower class as antidotes to the country's ills, be it conformist tendencies in the 1920s or economic woes in the 1930s. At the time, Appalachian folk were sympathetic White characters, but also marked as altogether different (Harkins, 2004).[8]

Following the Great Depression, the mediation of Appalachian populations and stereotypes associated with them created clear distinctions based on respectability and value. These images would evolve over time to secure Appalachia and its people as lower-class and in turn something to be avoided. Stereotypes about Appalachian culture have "evolved into cliché precisely because they have appeared largely unchallenged in American print and media over the last two centuries" (Roggenkamp, 2008, p. 193). The caricature of the Appalachian *hillbilly* and its associated traditions are coded with "notions of a cultural backwater, an area of dark, deep, smoky woods… clans, unkempt children, domestic animals running amuck, and 'moonshine'" (Kupitz, 1999, p. 38). Popular manifestations of this image such as *The Beverly Hillbillies, The Scraggs,* and *The Real McCoys* epitomized the evolution of what a hillbilly was thought to be. Today the tradition continues as the hillbilly persona is mocked and articulated as undesirable

[8] Here I have selected strategically from Harkins' fantastic study on the "hillbilly" as a culturally salient icon in America. For a more detailed discussion of the term and its cultural functions in forming American identity, see Harkins' (2004) book, *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon.*

and distinctly different in shows such as *Hollywood Hillbillies*, *Here Comes Honey Boo Boo*, and even supposed positive depictions such as those in *Duck Dynasty*. These images appeal to a tradition of making Appalachian populations legible insofar as they are the antithesis of progress as it is articulated in the contemporary world.

What is the Social in Socialization?

The American "hillbilly" – often distinctly Appalachian – provides a representative antidote for how Appalachian populations have been positioned with regard to progress in America and in turn socialized as lower- or working-class. It also begs the question as to how something like the hillbilly caricature comes to have social impact, and consequently what constitutes *a social phenomenon,* as well as how this relates to rhetoric. Here, I distinguish between the social world as an object phenomenon and the social world as an ongoing achievement. The social world, as Bruno Latour (2005) makes clear in his critique of sociology and the social sciences more broadly, is not a domain, but an ongoing process of traceable phenomena gaining relevance in the world. Latour's reworking of what constitutes *social* is important when understanding how class is achieved over time, because it places heavy emphasis on how certain phenomena (for Latour, these are called "actors") constitute and maintain relationships in the world and how those relationships become meaningful.

Class – at least in the case of Appalachia and many other sacrifice zones – is maintained in the way meaning and value are structured over time, structures that are never centralized in a single actor or text but generate the context from which meaning is derived. According to Latour (2005),

> To be sure, the structure of language is spoken by nobody in particular and yet it is out of this that all speech acts are generated, although the ways in which la parole meets la langue have remained totally mysterious ever since the time of Saussure. The system of law doesn't reside anywhere in particular and yet is invoked no less mysteriously in every specific case, even though it is recognized that it has to be made up of some ad hoc totality for each case. Capitalism is certainly the dominant mode of production but no one imagines that there is some homunculus CEO in command… (p. 167).

That is, systems of meaning-making, and with it phenomena such as class, are not located in any specific place, but are maintained and enforced through their continued iterations. I contend that this makes class appear natural and in some cases moral insofar as ideals of progress articulated with regard to Western notions of deliberative democracy and capitalism vitalize both class distinctions and rhetorical phenomena such as credibility, sense-making, respectability, and rationale.

Latour's approach to capitalism aligns with the above discussion of broad, loosely defined rubrics for organizing the world and then defining progress. Capitalism – for Latour and this project – is not a thing, but a way of being affected by the world, a way of making sense of what constitutes good and evil.[9] It provides not only a loosely defined economic system, but also a set of principles and orientations that affect the way people organize thoughts and values. What constitutes *progress* within these principles and orientations affects political decision-making and heavily influences popular discourse. It is not, however, the only way of making sense of the world. Different laws, logics, and orientations often compete in a given context. Just as Alcoff claims different forms of life may exist and allow people to move through the world, Latour claims that actors get by with more than one way of understanding and organizing the world. However, to the

[9] For a more detailed discussion, see Latour's lecture *On The Affects of Capitalism* (for discussion only) http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/136-AFFECTS-OF-K-COPENHAGUE.pdf

extent that one such way holds sway over and influences the rhetorical demands on populations as they relate to the articulation of value through symbols and behaviors, class is socialized, built into the very process of sense-making and relationship building. In the contemporary world, capitalism very much holds sway of what constitutes progress, and in turn what constitutes class. However, Latour is generally disinterested in the idea of inequality. To take up this approach to the social and maintain an explicit focus on imbalances such as class requires an astute eye to the unlikely ways inequality and domination are maintained (Latour, 2005). Rhetoric, as a theory and practice, provides the unlikely manifestations of class, bound and sutured in fundamental ways to how class is achieved and maintained in the contemporary world.

For Latour, the only way to examine the social is to trace its tangible manifestations. Consequently, the first step to engaging the socialization of class is to engage its concrete manifestations. This attends to, but is not limited to, the stereotypes and stigmas attached to Appalachian populations, the degradation of lands, the loss of steady employment, the construction of the hillbilly caricature, and the polluting of air and water supplies. This project attends carefully to the rhetorical devices used by both pro- and antiMTR voices as a way of tracking how these manifestations are related to rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control.

Violence and Civility

One of the easiest ways to highlight the relationship between class, progress, and rhetoric is to analyze carefully the behaviors that are implicitly or explicitly excluded from the realm of civility, because they do not qualify as in line with relevant iterations

of progress. Violence is prime among these phenomena. Violence and discourses about violence have long been used to make or maintain class distinctions, drawing ideological lines between populations. When considered within the context of ideals regarding progress and civility, violence functions in a variety of complex and fundamentally rhetorical ways in the contemporary world. First, bodily violence, or what Slavoj Žižek (2008) calls subjective violence, is politically read as savage behavior, the antithesis of democracy, progress, and civility. Anthropologist Neil Whitehead (2005, 2007, 2009) contends that aversions to violence betray a cultural inability to make sense of violence within progressive contemporary societies, an inability derived in large part from an overly simplistic association of violence with "primitive" cultures. Consequently, violence has been key in the demarcation and devaluation of cultures that do not adhere to progressive standards for behavior and world-making.

Rhetoric as a field reflects this primarily political reading of violence. Because rhetorical theory generally aligns itself with democratic ideals of civility and deliberation, the scholarly orientation to rhetoric more often than not rejects violence. Rhetoricians often go so far as to use it as a metaphor for oppression and disenfranchisement more broadly. Violence is used as an adjective attached to nouns such as "discourse" and "systems" to demarcate *bad* phenomena from *good* phenomena. Despite numerous treatments of symbolic violence, rhetoric's general aversion to seriously considering the rhetorical effects of physical violence are a symptom of a Western dream of a world free of immediate, physical violence (Engles, 2013). Such a dream assumes that violence predates visual symbols as the accepted means of social and political negotiation (Stormer, 2013), and positions violence as the antithesis of progress.

Appalachian populations have been mediated and framed as violent for generations. Media pilgrimages to isolated Appalachian towns have tended to coincide with economic downturn and violent outbursts. In the 1920s and 1930s, high-profile mining conflicts became one of the primary lenses through which other parts of the country came to see and understand Appalachia. Of particular note are West Virginia's "mine wars" in the early 1920s (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4) and Kentucky's Harlen County coal conflicts of the 1930s.[10] These conflicts were often bloody and in turn attractive to particularly northeastern journalists. The region's violent history also served as ideological divides within the region itself. Where one stood on such events, such as the murder of Sid Hatfield, hero of the union miner in West Virginia in the 1910s and 1920s, or the vilification of organized labor after the bloody *Battle of Evarts* in Kentucky, came to represent one's commitments in the region. Thus, violence and violent events became focal points in the construction of one's local political identity.

A preordained distinction between violence and legitimacy as it is measured with regard to deliberative democracy, civility, and progress gainsays the effects violence may have on political commitments and identity. Violence is and has long been the domain of the state (see Badiou, 2012; Foucault, 1977). This returns violence to its (de)moralizing function as violence done in the name of the pursuit of Western notions of democracy are not only licensed, but are often celebrated. This comes in the form of war, police crackdowns, and as will be discussed in the following section, environmental destruction. This form of violence is what Benjamin (1955) called *mythic violence.* In both its physical and abstract sense, mythic violence is law-making and remaking. It is the

[10] For a more thorough discussion of Harlan County in the 1930s, see John Hevener's (2002) *Which Side Are You On?: The Harlan County Coal Miners, 1931-1939.*

violence of the law and the violence that enforces it in practice, the creation and maintenance of boundaries necessary to securing the current order of the world. Today that current order is deliberative democracy and capitalism, and violence is used in a variety of ways to maintain that order. As DeLuca (2013) put it, "In seeing violence as opposite rhetoric, scholars smugly enable systemic violence, rendering invisible the catastrophic levels of violence inflicted upon plants, animals, people, and ecosystems as part of the normal process of the technoindustrial juggernaut that ravages the earth" (p. 231). The moral rejection of physical violence, be it political or academic, serves to circumvent more focused and sustained attention on these systemic, farther reaching forms of violence, particularly as they manifest themselves in the destruction of land and people at the hands of the state or capital interests.

This also manifests itself in what counts as violence and what is dismissed. Or, to put it another way, not all violence is created equal. Who commits the violence and who suffers it affects its political salience. The recognition that violence against some populations is not as valuable or important as violence against others throws into relief the ideological dimensions of the unquestioned focus on subjective violence. Populations that are socialized as lower class and less valuable are required by the contemporary, industrialized world. So, violence done to these populations holds less cultural weight. Their value, or lack thereof, is made virtually invisible when seen through the lens of deliberative democracy and progress, but is strikingly clear in the recognition that such commitments have political consequences.

The dogged focus on subjective violence in the contemporary world is also maintained as a way to veil the habitual language patterns that forward the universality of

stratification and the violence done in the name of an unrelenting commitment to capitalism (Žižek, 2008). The moralism of deliberative democracy does not just circumvent attention to bodily harm done to people. The unquestioned rejection of physical violence in the name of a commitment to deliberation and acute attention to some of the physical realities of violence, which often affectively impact witnesses, allows for the institutional and cultural disregard for more systemic forms of violence, such as the discursive devaluation of populations, environmental/cultural destruction, and disproportionate exposure to work-related risks, to name only a few. Consequently, commitments to progress and commitments against subjective violence reach their ideological peak when they divert attention away from the "abstract spectral logic of capital that determines what happens in social reality" (Žižek, 2008, p. 13). That is, subjective violence is most ideologically potent when it encourages blindness to the violence of capitalism, to patterns of living that not only do physical harm to people, but do violence in other ways. These patterns help articulate contemporary notions of progress, dividing and stratifying populations. Violence is oftentimes narrowed to subjective violence, detaching other forms of violence – particularly systemic violence done to sacrifice zones and communities as well as various marginalized populations – from the political marker of *violence,* the antithesis to the ideal of progress.

Although the lion's share of rhetorical scholarship distinguishes the rhetorical process from violence, some rhetorical scholars have challenged the judiciousness of such delineation. Violence and its role in social protest was approached with some seriousness following the political unrest of the 1960s and 1970s, but ultimately remained a tangential, predominantly negative phenomenon in the larger effort to understand rhetorics of protest

as they relate to the democratic project. More recently, Erin Rand (2009) contended that if violence necessarily limits rhetorical space and agency for some, it may also necessarily expand and otherwise alter spaces for others. DeLuca (2013) warned that rhetoric – as a field – risks becoming archaic if the violence of the world is not taken up with earnestness.

Despite these challenges, the division between violence and rhetoric relies on the same assumptions regarding civilization and progress that are often used to make distinctions between backwards and progressive cultures in political and social arenas. This distinction misses the forest for the trees; it moralizes violence in a way that licenses and celebrates a multitude of violences in the name of the particular ideals of democracy and capitalism that hold sway in the contemporary world. Whether or not the violence is *justified* or *good* is not at all the question here. Such moralism is what creates the binds that socialize class in the first place. The question is one of meaning and world-making. While many violent practices may very well be appalling, their relationships to meaning and identity are not at all simple. Additionally, to group all acts of violence, particularly resistive violence, with its most senseless or oppressive forms may constitute one way of maintaining oppressive relationships. Frantz Fanon (1968) famously critiqued the emphasis on nonviolence and the cultural aversion to violent resistance as a product of colonial world-making. According to Fanon, the value demarcation between violent resistance and nonviolent resistance creates cultural constraints on oppressed populations, working to silence and delegitimize them. This positionality is always already political, excluding certain populations through their disassociation with progress. A more complex and nuanced approach to violence is required to illuminate how class and rhetoric are interwoven.

In forwarding the socialization of class, this project is not designed as an unmasking critical project, but instead strives to assemble the socialization of class as it is rhetorically achieved, negotiated, and challenged. Consequently, this project is part of that process – albeit a modest part – rather than a removed critical analysis of objects (see Latour, 2004). In what follows, I try to make sense of how class is imbedded into rhetorical conflicts over MTR and in turn how those conflicts reflect the politics of progress in the world today.

Mountaintop Removal

MTR is an extreme form of strip mining aimed at economic efficiency. It speeds up the mining process, reduces the number of miners needed, and reaches seams that are virtually impossible to mine via traditional methods. The process requires multiple steps. Companies must first clear-cut swaths of forests before leveling out paths for mining equipment and coal trucks. Once the mountain itself is accessible, explosives made up of the same mixture used in the Oklahoma City bombing, but up to 100 times more powerful, are used to blow the top off a mountain and expose the coal below (Austin & Clark, 2012; Barry, 2012; Fox, 1999). Then, a dragline – a $100 million piece of equipment that often stands as tall as 40 stories and is assembled on site – is used to remove the rock and coal. Draglines can remove more than 110 cubic yards of rock and coal with a single scoop. The excess dirt, rocks, and soil from the mountain are typically dumped into a valley, covering streams, burying vegetation, and forcing wildlife to migrate. The coal is then scooped from the land and loaded into trucks to be taken to nearby processing plants where it is cleaned and prepared for shipment, usually via rail.

The MTR process intensifies the shift from manual to machine labor in the coal industry, a process that began as early as mining itself. Mechanization reduces the labor force, increasing economic stress in much of rural West Virginia, and Appalachia broadly (Scott, 2007). Though coal employment is vital to the construction of West Virginia's cultural identity, coal as an industry – much like the whole of industrial capitalism – strives to reduce such employment. Perhaps the first major step in the direction of MTR was the development of the continuous miner, introduced to the public on May 6th, 1949 in the *Fairmont Times*, a local newspaper out of northern West Virginia. The continuous miner was a caterpillar-like machine that dug into the side of a rock face or coal seam. It tore away at the earth at an alarming rate compared to its human counterparts, replacing some miners and making work more physically taxing for those that remained (Phillips, 1984). The importance of this shift for contemporary MTR conflicts and their effects on local populations cannot be overstated. In West Virginia, coal production has generally increased at a relatively steady rate since MTR's introduction in the 1970s, from fewer than 90 million short tons a year in the mid-1970s to more than 120 million short tons through the late 1990s and into the 2000s. At the same time, coal employment has dropped from around 70,000 jobs in the mid-1970s to fewer than 30,000 into the 2000s (Bell & York, 2010). While coal production has dropped more recently, according to the National Mining Association, West Virginia mining companies employed just over 20,000 people as recently as 2013 ("U.S. coal mine employment by state, region, and method of mining - 2013," 2015).

Cannelton Industries Inc. was the first energy company to bring MTR to West Virginia, in 1970. The first MTR project in the state mined coal on Bullpush Mountain in

southern West Virginia near the Feyette/Kanawah county line (Burns, 2005). Coal demand increased at the time to answer petroleum shortages and exaggerated fears and trepidation about global economic stability. The Vietnam War proved costly to the United States and its energy needs. These demands came at a time where coal companies themselves were in an economic decline. Draglines and MTR practices provided a way to invest in short-term growth by expediting the mining process and minimizing the number of workers required. This also greatly increased the scale of coal extraction, creating larger mining projects that covered more geographic space (Austin & Clark, 2012).

Soon after MTR's implementation in southern West Virginia, disasters and destructions began galvanizing local communities and inspiring activism against advanced, large-scale mining projects. In 1972, a coal slurry dam broke and dumped 132 million gallons of coal slurry into the nearby Buffalo Creek hollow in West Virginia, where approximately 5,000 people lived. Coal slurry waste is made up of water, coal particles, and chemicals used to wash coal (Austin & Clark, 2012). Coal slurry dams often sit above towns and hallows near coal refineries, particularly near high-volume strip mines, like MTR mines. These damns hold millions of gallons of waste created in the coal-cleaning process. When the dam near Buffalo Creek broke, 125 people were killed and more than 4,000 were injured (Erikson, 1976), and nearly everyone in the hollow was left homeless. What is more, the dam passed a safety inspection just four days before breaking (House & Howard, 2009). In 2000, a similar slurry dam broke in Martin County, Kentucky, releasing 250 million gallons of coal waste, making the spill 20 times larger than the infamous Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The introduction of large-scale surface mining and tragedies such as Buffalo Creek sparked unrest in West Virginia and the Appalachian region as a whole. The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) was passed in response to this unrest. The act was designed to regulate the environmental destruction of MTR mining and to temper industrial effects on both communities and the land being mined. It dictated that MTR mining sites needed to be restored to their *approximate original contour*. As it turns out, mountains are not easy to put back together once you take them apart. Even still, the SMCRA itself is rarely enforced to the letter. Instead, companies apply for variances, which allow them to repurpose the land, creating meadows or general "commercial property" that is valued for its potential to house commercial development, reflecting the perceived inherent value of commerce over mountains, forests, and biodiversity. The threshold for what constitutes commercial development, however, is somewhat questionable. In many cases, operators have not been required to follow through with commercial reclamation, and only required to suggest a use for the flattened land. "Successful" commercial reclamation projects in West Virginia have included a failed golf course located in one of the state's poorest counties and a state penitentiary that cost almost 50% more than its $140 million budget because the ground was not stable for a heavy construction project after blasting (Shnayerson, 2008). While the SMCRA acknowledged the dangers of altering geography on such a large scale, it remains limited in its protection of the state, its land, and its people. This has resulted in economic stress on state and local governments, desolate or otherwise unused land, and a fundamental altering of local geographies and biodiversity.

Despite local unrest and national legislation, MTR gained momentum in the

region and favor with the coal industry in the 1980s. As demand for coal steadily decreased in the 80s, absentee energy companies with investments in the region stepped up efforts to reduce mining costs to improve *bottom line* figures. This created a surge in the industry that continued into the 1990s. In 1997, West Virginia had a record year in terms of production, producing more than 181 million tons of coal, followed by only a slight decline to 180 million tons in 1998 (Nyden, 2013). Despite these spikes, coal employment numbers steadily remained under 30,000 jobs in the state (Bell & York, 2010), intensifying conflicts moving into the 21st century and sparking the events and rhetorical landscapes that will be the subject of analysis here. The focus of this project is on conflicts occurring just after the turn of the 21st century, when MTR practices were expanding coming out of the 1990s, and in response, grassroots resistance was gaining momentum. These conflicts most clearly reflect a variety of rifts that manifest the achievement and maintenance of class.

Progress and Rift

MTR is justified and enacted in the name of progress, the unending and necessary march forward in the name of industrial capitalism. It is defended as the only way to possibly maintain the industry's presence in West Virginia, the only way to keep up with the competition. It speeds up the mining process to keep up with global energy demands and keeps expenditures down to maintain artificially low energy costs. In doing so, MTR creates two types of rifts that are increasingly evident. These rifts are the manifestation of the socialization of class in West Virginia, the points where class stratification and legibility affect populations directly and indirectly. One rift is political: specific strains

are disproportionately placed on populations that reflect and perpetuate the devaluation of those populations. The other rift is ecological: natural resources, biodiversity, landscapes, and ecological balance are destroyed faster than they can recover. This ultimately leads to regions that are sectioned off and ecologically obliterated so that other places and populations may avoid the messy side of industrial capitalism.

These two types of rifts are not so much distinct as they are different sides of the same coin. Here these categories are used to highlight the varied ways class is manifest in the lives of certain populations. Metabolic analysis throws each rift into relief, focusing on the natural cycles and regulatory process that allow systems (be they ecological, biological, social, economic) to reproduce over time (Austin & Clark, 2012; Foster et al., 2010; Foster, 2009). Contemporary capitalism and the imperatives of economic and technological progress don't just demand the extraction of coal; they demand it at a rate that far outpaces the economic metabolism of local coal mining communities and the ecological metabolism of their surrounding geography. That is, the maintenance of economic progress in its current form requires the degradation of specific communities and environments that exceeds the ability of those communities and environments to maintain themselves, let alone grow, creating the abovementioned *sacrifice zones* and *sacrifice populations*.

Political/Social Rifts

West Virginia's dependence on coal and emergence as a monoeconomy began in the mid to late 1800s. West Virginia became a state on June 20th, 1863. Its laws, even its seal, were designed to balance the agricultural base of the state and the industrial

economic opportunities the land provided; however, in 1884 the West Virginia State Tax Commission issued a report indicating that the state's economy lagged drastically behind expectations, given its resources. Despite early efforts for balance, the state's political commitments shifted in the late 1880s to privilege industrial uses of land, setting a precedent that has been hard to break ever since:

> Misguided by the belief that rich natural resources would lead to wealth, the new state leaders created a single industry, resource dependent economy that would ensure the state's status as a bit player in the national economy… Because of the power structure created and solidified by the state's political system, any prosperity derived from mountaintop removal coal mining (MTR) is assured to only benefit mine operators and conversely, any chance of long term, sustainable prosperity will continue to elude the state. (Burns, 2005, p. 2)

That is, various political decisions have created a situation in which the benefits of mining generally move out of the state, while costs move in.

One of the primary hardships brought down on rural West Virginia populations is lack of employment options. West Virginia – as a state economy – relies on and has invested heavily in the coal industry. However, mining jobs in West Virginia peaked in 1940 at 130,457 (wvminesafety.org, 2013). Since, there has been a negative relationship between coal production and coal employment (Bell & York, 2010). Despite incredible growth in mining operations over the years, by 1989, service industries became the biggest industries in the state (Maggard, 1994). These jobs provide less financial security than mining jobs but are more easily attainable. This signals a shift in employment patterns in coal communities and much of West Virginia. As less stable jobs dominated the state and the coal jobs many depended on for so long disappeared, West Virginia struggled with unemployment, reflecting the continued monopoly coal has on the state's economic landscape and the need to diversify its economy. The state's historic high for

unemployment is 18.8%, hit in 1983, which is 2.3% higher than the second highest unemployment rate in the country for any year since 1976. Additionally, early 2015 projections indicate West Virginia may have recently reclaimed the highest unemployment rate in the country ("Current unemployment rates for states and historical highs/lows," 2015). MTR and the overall mechanization of mining have created a clear and widening rift between the state's economic dependence on coal and the economic security it provides West Virginians.

In addition to employment issues, the effects of MTR on local populations are profound. The explosives used in MTR send toxins into the soil and air, contaminating local drinking water (Holzman, 2011). Regions with MTR mining have experienced increased levels of asthma, heart disease, lung cancer, and general illness compared to national averages (PR Newswire, 2013). Additionally, school children in these areas are particularly susceptible to asthma (Goodell, 2006). Generally, counties with MTR sites rank among the lowest in national assessments of general physical health (Goodell, 2006; Hendryx & Ahern, 2009). When adjusted for population and age, coal mining counties have on average almost 11,000 more deaths per year than other parts of the country (Hendryx, 2009).

Those living in mining towns and counties face a barrage of hardships and stresses. The process of clear cutting the forest required to begin an MTR project results in less regulated water flow down the mountain during and after storms. This results in increased flooding in lower lands and hollows (Fox, 1999). Additionally, large-scale environmental changes in or around one's home, such as those in MTR regions, cause place-based stress (Albrecht et al., 2007; Cordial, Riding-Malon, & Lips, 2012), prevent

residents from getting their requisite sleep, and increase feelings of powerlessness and uncertainty (Cordial et al., 2012). Such changes in one's environment have also been linked to increased levels of violence (Piven & Cloward, 1979). To exacerbate this, the mining industry pits community members against one another, often strategically. Families that depend on mining or pursue mining jobs confront activists and other community members who fight against the practice of MTR, and seek stricter regulations of the industry. This leads to community in-fighting and oftentimes violence among community members (Barry, 2012; Burns, 2005; Shnayerson, 2008), discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. Many activists have moved, divorced, or given up on activism due to the stress and fear these conflicts cause. Between declining economic opportunities and increased environmental stress, West Virginia has also seen population decreases. While the national average for population change in America was a 36.3 % increase, counties with MTR experienced a 20% decrease around this time (Grenoble, 2012).

Finally, for those who do remain in coal country, the mining industry brings with it unique challenges to the material culture of local communities. Many of the family homes and properties that Massey Energy and other companies have bought up had been in a particular family for hundreds of years, passed through heirship, or the legal passing on of property to family descendents upon death. In the mid to late 1990s, coal companies sought out distant relatives that had stake in heirship properties, many of which were estranged or had no idea who was living in the valley, and bought out their shares. Once they owned a majority of the share, they would take any holdouts to court. In most cases, this would force a sale of the property. The coal company could outbid

virtually any local resident. Once bought, homes could be destroyed to make room for mining operations. MTR mining has also affected family cemeteries in coal country, as it did in the Coal River Valley, where locals have been forced to go through hazard training, sign in with the coal company, wear protective gear, and be escorted by a company employee to visit tombstones, many of which were tilted and warped by restructuring of the local mountains (Shnayerson, 2008). Key places and spaces (see Endres & Senda-Cook, 2011 for distinction) important to local communities are not just bought up by mining companies; they are destroyed and/or discarded in the process.

Each item discussed in this short section reflects a way the coal industry is related to manifestations of class. Coal country residents are disproportionately exposed to economic insecurity, hazardous conditions, physical and emotional stress, and the destruction of material culture. Their health, culture, and general well-being is implicitly valued less because it is sacrificed for the sake of industrial progress.

Environmental Rifts

In addition to impacts that are primarily thought of in terms of human effects, MTR devastates ecosystems and damages the environment in ways not primarily considered impactful on humans. MTR quite literally flattens the land, on average resulting in mountains being lowered by 34 meters, valleys rising by 52 meters, and slope steepness reducing by 9% to 11%. Such loss of topographic complexity affects biodiversity and soil quality, in turn altering the fertility of the land (Wickham et al., 2013). As addressed above, reclamation projects often never even attempt to reproduce the steepness of the flattened land. Even under the best of circumstances reclamation has

been a controversial topic in MTR conflicts. I have driven to see a number of reclamation sites firsthand. In each case, driving up the mountain and onto a flattened treeless plateau felt like driving onto land that belongs someplace else, land that should be in the Midwest, jarring and disjointed in the middle of a dense Appalachian mountain range. Even when serious efforts are put into actually repairing the mountain, reclamation takes time and is not guaranteed. Sixty-year projections in many reclaimed areas predict only 77% regrowth of indigenous vegetation compared to undisturbed areas (Palmer et al., 2010).

MTR mining affects water supplies in varied ways. For one, mining chemicals contaminate local watersheds, areas that collect water at the head of a stream and feed it down the mountain. In turn, mine-derived chemicals reduce biodiversity in the streams. This has been linked to significant decline in a number of criteria that are used to measure biological health in the region. Increased sulfate levels are a particular concern, causing chemical flux that poisons many aquatic plants. The restoration of streams in the region is considered by many to be a pipedream. According to former director of the Chesapeak Biological Laboratory at the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science, when stream restoration is shown to "work", the mitigation from the original stream remains drastic (in Shnayerson, 2008), demonstrating that the standards for reclamation remained – and remain – grossly detached from the realities of what mining actually does to these areas. MTR has also been linked to increased conductivity and selenium levels in local streams. Conductivity measures the ability of water to conduct electricity and is one of the key measures for determining the health of a stream. Elevated levels compromise the health and lifespan of aquatic life. Similarly, elevated levels of the

element selenium cause reproductive issues in fish, birds, and reptiles. The element is difficult to remove from an environment once found. The federal government has confirmed both threats, but offers only *suggested* guidelines for maintaining healthy conductivity and selenium levels ("Grassroots progress report," 2014).

Furthermore, shrinking forest habitats have resulted in the decline of a number of animal species in West Virginia. Bird populations, particularly those that rely on old-growth forests, have decreased significantly ("Ecological impacts of mountaintop removal," 2013). A 2014 U.S. Geological Survey report also confirms that MTR practices directly threaten local fish populations. Native salamanders and many aquatic insects have been affected, and in many cases are completely absent from areas where they were once found ("Ecological impacts of mountaintop removal," 2013), reflecting a shift to dry environments in the state. All of this represents not only shifts in the region's ecosystems, but a narrowing of biodiversity that cannot be reclaimed.

The environmental impacts of MTR are profound and the ability of mining companies to fix what they destroy is limited at best. Appalachia is home to some of the most beautiful, diverse, and rich forests in the world, and their destruction represents the devaluation of not just the land, but the people and the cultures there as well. The environmental and human/political effects of MTR are interwoven, but even if humans were to leave the hills of West Virginia forever, the damage done there in the name of progress may never be fully undone.

The Players

MTR, much like any large controversy, cannot be strictly isolated to individual actors. However, in the case in question, a few key groups and individuals have come to represent the larger patterns this project seeks to analyze. Massey Energy and the Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW) are emphasized in this project as microcosms that betray how the socialization of class animates the rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control.

Massey Energy – what would become one of the largest and most aggressive coal producers in the region – rose to power alongside the dragline and took steps to further coal's stranglehold over the state. Though Alpha Energy bought Massey in 2011 for more than $7 billion, Massey Energy left an indelible mark on West Virginia. It was not always the most prominent mining company in the state and its rise never made it the biggest or most profitable mining company either, but it was and remains today synonymous with MTR mining. Massey was founded in 1920, and became a substantial energy company largely focused in the Appalachian region. Until Don Blankenship was named President and CEO in 1992, the company was run by five generations of Masseys, starting with the founder, A.T. Massey.

Blankenship was a brash and outspoken CEO, highly involved in bankrolling politicians and campaigning for industry interests. Before and especially under Don Blankenship's leadership, Massey Energy had a well-documented record for questionable environmental practices and was often the object of the ire of protests. The company's negligence in the famous Upper Big Branch mine disaster and Blankenship's dishonesty with investors made him the object of a federal criminal trial in October 2015.

Blankenship and Massey's record was troubling, to say the least, and inspired many activists to organize and fight back. Massey's tactics and its almost blatant disregard for local communities reflect how the ideologies and rationales of industrialization and progress continue to trample and exclude rural mining communities.

The CRMW was and arguably remains the most prominent among the organized attempts to combat the coal industry's unbridled expansion into central and southern West Virginia, and it remains vital to the fight against destructive mining practices in the region. It sits in the middle of some of the state's largest and most active MTR mines. The group has been predominately made up of and sustained by working-class White women from rural communities in and around the Coal River Valley (Barry, 2008, 2012). CRMW not only advocates for stricter environmental regulations on the coal industry, but advocates as well for the preservation and protection of cultural practices rooted in the history of mountain populations.

Judy Bonds (1952-2011), the group's late figurehead and one of the most recognizable voices against MTR in the region, epitomized in many ways the struggles grassroots activists face as well as some of the rhetorical traits of rural West Virginia, a poetic bluntness and quick wit. She began paying attention to the effects of MTR and fighting against the practice in 1996, at the beginning of a swell of MTR discourse and debate. Bonds worked at the local Pizza Hut when she discovered the devastation of MTR. According to Bonds,

> One evening me and my grandson, who was seven, were walking up the holler and he got over in the creek to play. And there were dead fish everywhere. I didn't notice them at first, but he did. He was standing there with fish in his hands, and I was screaming, "Get out of there! Throw them fish down! Get out of there!" (cited in House & Howard, 2009, p. 142).

Bonds called a local lawyer to discuss making the coal companies clean up the area. She was flatly dismissed. The lawyer simply told Bonds, "This is coal country." In response, Bonds told the lawyer, "I don't think you're the lawyer I am looking for. I think you're a pussy" (cited in House & Howard, 2009, p. 138). With that, Bonds' plainspoken, brash nature was brought to the fight against MTR in the Coal River Valley.

Later, in 2003, Bond's activism earned her the Goldman Environmental Prize. The prize is given to "grassroots environmental heroes from the six inhabited continental regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands and Island Nations, North America, and South and Central America. The Prize recognizes individuals for sustained and significant efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment, often at great personal risk" ("About the Prize," 2015). The award came with $125,000. At the time, Bonds was earning $12,000 a year at CRMW. After taxes, paying off the mortgage on her home, buying her grandson braces, and giving her granddaughter money, Bonds gave the remaining $48,500 to CRMW, which was $5,000 more than their yearly budget at the time. Fellow activist Maria Gunnoe, primarily of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, also won the award for her work against MTR in 2009.

Massey and CRMW represent two larger, decentralized, and diverse sides of this conflict. They are embodiments of how class is related to the rhetorics of MTR, weaving in and out of relationships with government agencies, proximity to damaged lands, exposure of resources to toxins, and identity in West Virginia.

Chapter Outline

To forward and demonstrate the socialization of class with regard to MTR conflicts in West Virginia, this dissertation project will proceed in four subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 briefly discusses the history of coal in West Virginia, paying careful attention to the strategic cultivation of a dependent and explicitly devalued population over time, before discussing MTR conflicts between approximately 2005 and 2012, a time of particular activist and industry fervor. In the first part of this chapter, I focus on how coal came to prominence in West Virginia and how that prominence led to and relied on the broader socialization of Appalachian populations as less valuable. The latter half of the chapter covers contemporary MTR conflicts as they reflect this devaluation and are manifest in specific events. This chapter demonstrates that Appalachian populations have been – over time – vital to the construction of class in the United States, and reveals how the devaluation of Appalachian populations is manifest in disparities between mining companies and community grassroots organizations.

Chapter 3 discusses the cultivation and key characteristics of West Virginia's coal culture as an active mechanism in maintaining class distinctions. Coal is not just an industry in West Virginia; it is engrained in ways of thinking and speaking, ways of organizing the world and its priorities. In many ways, this culture is a site-specific manifestation of industrial capitalism. West Virginia's coal culture takes hold of West Virginia populations in specific ways. This chapter covers how the state's coal culture animates discourse and policies that defend and maintain MTR practices in the state. It also carefully analyzes how activists work against the coal culture of the state, attending to the rhetorical breaks in fundamental, taken-for-granted commitments that have become

hegemonic in the state. This chapter outlines the achievement of class as an always already-present part of the rhetorical landscape in the region, particularly with regard to coal.

Chapter 4 analyzes violence as a key theme in historical and contemporary mining conflicts that is generally used to demarcate populations as the antitheses of progress. This chapter focuses on how the narrowing of violence to subjective violence as antithetical to progress has been vital to devaluing Appalachian populations. It also examines the complex relationship between violence and rhetoric in the conflicts in question. This chapter reflects on the classed dimensions of rhetoric as a field and practice indebted to unreflective commitments to progress. The classed dimensions of rhetoric help maintain class as an invisible, moral analytic that extends economic disparity into a socialized phenomenon with fundamental and deeply rooted rhetorical consequence.

The dissertation concludes with a reiteration of how class is a rhetorically important achievement and what that means for scholars and activists interested in class, MTR, industrialism, and activism in the contemporary world. It is my hope that attending to the socialization of class as a multifaceted rhetorical phenomenon provides one approach among many for grappling with the exacerbated division and stratification of populations in the contemporary world, and opens up new and heuristically valuable space for further investigation into the relationship between class and rhetoric.

CHAPTER 2

ACHIEVING CLASS: A HISTORY OF EXPLOITATION

The achievement and socialization of class as it is discussed here is sutured to a history of exploitation. Different forms of life were cultivated in response to industrialization, immigration, and domestic as well as international political climates. Over time, some forms of life were strongly associated with economic and moral failures in a way that socialized particular populations as lower class and less valuable, highlighting how industrialization has linked particular rhetorics as being devalued. West Virginia's history with coal and the way it informs more contemporary mining conflicts in the state provide a microcosm for how class is socialized in tension with progress in an industrial capitalist world. Activists fighting against MTR cannot help but feel the effects of class in varied rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control as they confront the coal industry in West Virginia.

In this chapter, I track the achievement of class specifically as it is accomplished through the coal industry's history in West Virginia, focusing on key events, patterns, and relationships before moving onto the contemporary conflicts they inform. A focus on the historical achievement of class and its relationship to rhetoric highlights the importance of progress as an anchor for the rhetorics in question. As rhetorical appeals are built on and align with contemporary ideals of progress – be it through what constitutes

credibility and insider/outsider or how identities are articulated and resonate in different contexts – those appeals quietly forward demarcations and stratifications based on value that progress has been built upon over time.

The goal here is to work through the well-established history of the region and the state to highlight how that history reflects the accomplishment of class that saturates contemporary rhetorical climates, attending specifically to cases, relationships, and patterns that align with the articulation of capitalist ideals of progress against the backdrop of working- and lower class populations in the state. Appalachian studies scholars, historians, and sociologists have demonstrated and analyzed key themes and narratives within the region's and state's history, and covered that history in great detail. Here, I work through representative portions of that history, highlighting how the industry's evolution toward MTR mining in the state depended on and perpetuated the socialization of working- and lower class populations as less valuable, particularly in mining communities. While West Virginia provides an entry point for analysis for the abovementioned reasons, the relationships and patterns discussed here are indicative of those that occur in many parts of the world, particularly areas exploited for their natural resources. This history, specifically as Appalachian studies scholars and those otherwise invested in the region forward it, is useful as a basis for understanding how industrial and economic progress has been and remains related to the exploitation and degradation of Appalachian populations. In turn, this chapter lays the groundwork for questioning rhetoric's practical and theoretical dependence on progress, simultaneously highlighting the rhetorical dimensions of class and the class dimensions of rhetoric as a field and practice. West Virginia's history with coal illustrates the dynamics that animate class

divisions with regard to Appalachia and the obligation to transform such dynamics, fleshing out the varied and interrelated ways class distinctions manifest themselves in the rhetorical climate of this sacrifice zone.

A Brief History of Coal

The land that would ultimately make up West Virginia began its complicated relationship with coal long before the first dragline was even conceived. Investors and capitalists knew about the mineral-rich and lumber-rich Appalachian Mountains as early as the 1740s, placing the Appalachian Mountains on the radar of developers long before they inundated the region. Coal was not only the lens through which potential investors saw the land, it was important in the region early on as well. Local setters in central Appalachia burned coal to heat their homes in the 1820s and commercial coal operations were active in some parts of Appalachia as early as the 1840s (Bell & York, 2010). Still, coal's influence on the land was tangential compared to farming until the Civil War. Before the war, Appalachia featured small family farms, designed mostly for subsistence (Haynes, 1997). A few large turnpikes created a moderate flow of commerce and helped connect mountain communities with lowland populations, but rivers and rough paths remained a common way of moving through the rolling mountains in the region (Eller, 1982). To be sure, the land that would become West Virginia and the communities that lived there were different before industrialization and large-scale resource extraction came to the Appalachian Mountains. Resource extraction, of coal specifically, altered the land and the people in the region, becoming central to the economy and culture.

Becoming a Coal Culture

The entire makeup of Appalachia broadly, and what would become West Virginia more specifically, changed when outside investors became increasingly interested in the region's coal after the Civil War (Bell & York, 2010; Eller, 1982). Interest in coal gained momentum in the late 1860s, and West Virginia's state government welcomed the economic opportunities and population growth that came with it. West Virginia became a state in 1863, and shortly thereafter, the state legislature passed an act in March of 1864 designed to encourage immigration to West Virginia. The state was in a full-on blitz to attract people and industry to its hills. To this end, J. H. Diss Debar traveled throughout the United States and Europe attempting to inspire migration to West Virginia. In 1870, Debar wrote *The West Virginia handbook and immigrant's guide. A sketch of the state of West Virginia*, a painfully dry guide – published and printed in my own hometown of Parkersburg, West Virginia – designed to satisfy the various questions he received while traveling (Debar, 1870). The little book is a testament to West Virginia's youthful ambition and vision for its future. It is a romantic sketch of the state that presents a utopian view of a booming, diverse economy and a budding political powerhouse.

West Virginia, for a time, lived up to its own ambitions, blazing the trail for the industrialization of Appalachia. In 1864, the state created the position of "commissioner of immigration" to promote capital investment in state resources. Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia, following the Mountain State, all established similar political initiatives (Eller, 1982). Still, West Virginia's legal system was rooted in common law and favored the rights of individuals over budding business through the 1880s. That commitment grounded the ethos of West Virginia, but at the turn of the

century, the state's court of appeals began favoring industrial use of land, shifting institutional focus away from individual rights and toward the good of industries such as lumber and coal (Burns, 2005). Such a shift was vital to the ultimate creation of West Virginia as a sacrifice zone. As the state's legal system privileged industry's relationship with the land, it implicitly licensed the destruction of that land and did so in a way that began slowly articulating destruction as somehow *good* for West Virginia and its people.

As West Virginia became more appealing to capital investors, lumber was the first industry to gain strong influence in the state. In the late 1800s, nearly two-thirds of West Virginia was covered in virgin forest. This attracted business tycoons such as Samuel C. Rowland, a lumber merchant with varied investments, to come to areas like the Coal River Valley in the southern part of the state. Rowland and his party bought up lumber rights in the region and later brought a geologist to survey the land. The geologist found that there was a large amount of coal in Shumate's Branch, part of the Coal River Valley. Speculators then quickly bought up the mineral rights from local farms before the farmers realized the value of what they were *signing*[11] away. Early on, this established the relationships among outside investors, local communities, and the land that remains in place today. The land is seen and used first for its value to outside interests, while the people who live on the land are considered second, if they are considered at all. This relationship is maintainable so long as local populations are kept ignorant of the value of the land's natural resources. Ultimately, ignorance would shift to

[11] It is well documented that many of the families selling their land were not literate and were just encouraged to leave their mark on the page as a way of signing the contract.

dependence, as the coal industry would make itself central to the cultural, political, and even physical makeup of the state.

The overall political and physical landscape of West Virginia changed at the turn of the century. Between 1890 and 1900, railway expansion increased rapidly in the state, more than doubling the production of oil, coal, lumber, and glass in the region. During this time, the population of West Virginia increased by 24%, causing a 72% increase in wage earners in the state (Barkey, 2012; Eller, 1982). The railroad boom, rapid increase in population, and even more rapid increase in wage-earning workers were accompanied by a shift in land ownership and its influence in the state. Land continued to become a commodity. The purchase and control of land was fundamental to the creation of "a docile workforce" (Haynes, 1997, p. 49), a foundation of early mining practices in the state. The majority of West Virginians viewed the introduction of the coal industry as a temporary fix to agricultural woes (Shogan, 2006), but as Appalachian historian Ronald Eller (1982) put it, "By the turn of the century, the Appalachian South had become the economic colony of the urban Northeast… As the resources of the mountains flows wantonly out of the region, so did any hope for the independence and prosperity of the mountain people" (p. 85).

Not only were lands being bought up, but an imbalanced relationship between Appalachian populations and the broader popular culture began to simultaneously take shape. As outside economic interests found the region and began to tap its resources, the culture of self-sustainability was confronted with new political, economic, and social demands. Between 1870 and 1900, visiting the more isolated regions of Appalachia had become a trendy practice for northern journalists and writers as well as southern business

entrepreneurs. As the level and frequency of contact between those in the region and those outside it increased, so did the intensity and potency of culturally salient stereotypes. The Appalachian Mountains and the populations therein had already started to function as a cultural barrier, a way of "addressing national anxieties over economic and social concerns" (Ledford, 2000, p. 63). This would help establish a variety of myths about West Virginia and Appalachia more broadly that functioned to frame the land and its people for over a century.

Despite commonly accepted narratives of the time – which lasted well into the 21st century – the Appalachian region was not substantially different from other rural areas of the country in the late 19th century. The region itself owes much of its original distinction to the imagination of what were called *color writers* of the time (Lewis, 2000). The imagination of these writers breathed life into Appalachia as a discernable and distinct part of the country. According to Henry D. Shapiro (1978) and later Katherine Ledford (2000), the color writer movement of this time period, epitomized in magazines such as *Lippincott's,* was largely responsible for laying the groundwork for the later, more full construction of the Appalachian "hillbilly", using cartoonish characterizations to make sense of a land and people that were gaining prominence in America's industrialization. These color writers established an early connection between the economic and industrial dynamics of Appalachia to the popular legibility of Appalachian populations in the American imagination, in a way that was picked up conveniently and circulated in literary circles (Ledford, 2000).

The devaluation of local Appalachian populations was not isolated to abstract stereotypes and caricatures. The coal industry actively sought not only to control the

land, but also to control and exploit the people living and working in it. At the end of the 19th century, unionism became an important part of labor and class disputes in Appalachia. As coal took on a more prominent place in the state, the region, and the nation more broadly, unions formed to represent working miners across the country, the most prominent union being The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The UMWA organized in 1890 and immediately began its rocky relationship with southern West Virginia as one of the most active industrializing regions in the country at the time, with one of the most at-risk populations. West Virginia mine operators quickly took measures to keep unions out of the state. West Virginia was, from the beginning, a tough nut for unions to crack because mine owners and operators consciously and explicitly worked to maintain a devalued working population in the state and in turn worked diligently to keep unions out of the mines, so they could maintain disproportionate flows of money moving to absentee companies, and to ensure a docile and exposed workforce. The UMWA made a number of attempts to organize the state's most isolated mines, but coal operators – often with state and federal aid – used aggressive and violent tactics to thwart union efforts for years. The lack of protection in the region demonstrates the immediate risk West Virginia miners faced due to early attempts to establish and maintain specific power dynamics between operators and workers in the region. The aggressive aversion to unions reflected the operators' need for a dependent population to mine coal in the state. This dependent relationship is fundamental to the socialization of class in West Virginia, because it influences the way MTR and mining in general are defended in the state, maintaining key links between the need to mine coal at an accelerated rate, the centrality of coal to the state's economy, and the general good of the

state, the region, and the country.

One of the key tactics for controlling local mining populations was the creation of *coal camps* (also known as *mining towns* or *company towns*) that isolated work forces and reconfigured local sociopolitical hierarchies (Bell & York, 2010). Coal camps were created in strategic locations near mines to circumvent geographic obstacles. Mining companies owned everything in the camp, simply leasing housing and amenities to miners. At one point, over 70% of the total population of southern West Virginia lived in coal camps (Burns, 2005). These camps were made up of families who lost or sold their farms, immigrant laborers from the northeast, and miners imported from other regions, particularly the rural south. Mine guards who worked for the companies policed these camps, more often than not with complete autonomy and an iron fist. Mine guards were known for using violence and intimidation to maintain order and compliance, physically establishing authority for the industry and powerlessness for many workers.

Company towns were designed to change the once wildly independent populations of Appalachia into a dependent workforce, allowing for little oversight or protection of workers and their families (Shogan, 2006). They often had no roads in or out, and relied on company-owned railroad lines for transportation, imports, and exports. This allowed operators to secure complete control over the movement of goods and people. Additionally, companies paid miners in script. Script was a currency unique to each coal company and only redeemable at the company store (Lockard, 1998). This ensured economic dependence on coal companies and limited the ability of miners and their families to achieve financial security or mobility. It also allowed coal companies to charge higher prices for goods and keep miners in debt to the company (Bell & York,

2010). The creation of coal camps as well as the use of mine guards and script are important because each contributed to the creation of a new way of life, a new living experience for working-class miners in the region. Many miners, and in fact entire communities, became completely dependent on coal companies. Coal extraction became the central focus of entire towns, entire populations. This allowed coal to take a step toward becoming the center of West Virginia's economy and culture.

Safety regulations were virtually nonexistent in coalmines at the time. Freeland Brown, a former logger turned miner in southern West Virginia, was 16 years old when he went to work in the mines. To Brown, safety in the mines was a foreign concept: "Oh, you didn't have any safety – you never heard of any safety back in them days…If a man got killed, why, they would have hauled him out and buried him. That was about all there was to it back in them days" ("Interview with Freeland Brown," n.d., p. 3). Such conditions offered operators control over wages. Again, Brown recounts the flippancy with which mine operators could manipulate pay:

> If they felt like cutting, well, you've (sic) already cut your wages, and you couldn't do anything about it. You just run on to work, and if they raised your wages – you got a raise, why, that was [all right] too. But you didn't get much raises, most of the time they was just cut the wages, you know. ("Interview with Freeland Brown," n.d., pp. 4–5)

Brown's quotes demonstrate the complete and total control miner operators exacted over miners. From the casual way he describes what would happen to dead miners to the matter-of-fact way he discusses wage changes and the helplessness of miners to prevent pay cuts, Brown speaks volumes to the political, social, and cultural dynamics that put working-class miners and their families at the mercy of the coal industry. The control of

mine operators in many parts of central and southern West Virginia was unchecked and unquestioned, an accepted way of life.

Company towns also strategically used and reinforced gender roles in rural West Virginia as a way of maximizing profits and creating the dependent populations they desired. These towns were designed to fortify traditional gender roles in rural West Virginia, pressuring men into the dangerous work of mining, and women into domestic roles. As sociologists Shannon Elizabeth Bell and Richard York (2010) put it:

> These social norms, not at all unique to Appalachia, have historically forced households in capitalist economies to subsidize production through the unpaid work of women, allowing businesses to pay laborers' wages that fall far below the cost of reproducing the household." (120, see also Barry, 2012; Dunaway, 2001)

The intentional demarcation of gender roles kept production costs low and ensured men were central actors in the community (Maggard, 1994), a vital part of the contemporary maintenance of West Virginia's coal culture. The practices established in these camps bear strongly on the contemporary constructions of gender in the region and how they saturate cultural and political practice. As coal communities became dependent on coal companies, and families became dependent on miners as breadwinner figures, the male's place as the cultural center of the family was secured and coalmining jobs became cultural touchstones of economic security.

The latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th century laid the groundwork for the socialization of class in West Virginia. The political, cultural, economic, and social climate of the state was transformed; with it, so were the people. Working-class miners were established as less valuable by way of their living conditions, their work, and depictions of their culture in color magazines. This was done as life and lived experiences were changing fundamentally for working-class populations in the state, and

coal was becoming its political, social, and cultural center. The establishment of a working/lower class population was important not just for the coal industry, but also for the general establishment of a region and a workforce that would be identified, and ultimately would identify itself, with coal and coal mining.

Violence in the Mountains

The mid-1910s to the late 1920s was a tumultuous time for mining in West Virginia. Conflict and violence were relatively common in small mining communities. Violence has historically accompanied drastic shifts in a population's way of life (Piven & Cloward, 1979), and West Virginia was no exception. As shifts transformed West Virginia and exploitation became a more explicit part of the mining process, violence became part of the state's ethos. As a result, the mining-related violence after the turn of the century became a significant part of the state's history and identity.

In 1912, violence escalated in ways that would begin to transform labor relations in West Virginia. In Kanawah County, miners in the Paint Creek mines walked out after operators refused to renew their contracts and increase their pay to bring it level with other union mines in the state. The Paint Creek miners were soon joined by nearby nonunion Cabin Creek miners (Burns, 2005). Mine guards at both mines ejected miners from their company homes. In response, miners built tent communities and took up arms. Violence reached a head in February 1913 when a train full of mine guards drove through a striking tent colony at night and opened fire. Surprisingly, only one member of the tent colony was killed in the attack. Miners attacked mine guards in retaliation, resulting in 16 more fatalities. Discontent and violence in the area grew to the point that

Governor William E. Glasscock ultimately declared martial law, a declaration that would be repeated three more times over the next 11 months in response to continued violence in the area. Governor Glasscock's successor, Governor Henry D. Hatfield, kept martial law in effect until a secure resolution was reached. Martial law limited the use of intimidation and violence on the part of miners and mine guards. Ultimately, the two sides reached an agreement and achieved a short reprieve from the physical violence, while the violence of capital progress in the region continued with only a minor interruption.

Shortly after the violent Paint Creek/Cabin Creek conflicts, the United States entered World War I. The war created a lull in labor disputes in southern West Virginia. Miners were actively encouraged to mine as part of their patriotic duty. While the common goal of the "war effort" suppressed animosities, it also brought strip mining to the state in 1916, a response to higher demands for coal across the country (Burns, 2005). As the country went to war, mechanization picked up on the coal front, increasing safety concerns and decreasing job security in the mines at a time when opposition to the coal industry was silenced in the name of patriotism. This highlights the coal industry's place as part of the American ideal of progress: what is good for the country and good for the civilized world. Violence at home would have undermined the state's ability to take part in violence abroad, demonstrating that not all violence is created equal. Violence to protect workers would have been villainized, while the violence to maintain order during martial law and the violence America took part in during WWI was altogether different, more acceptable.

Once the war was over, animosities in southern West Virginia flared once more. The early 1920s were a famously violent time in the state's coalfields. The decade would see the deeply entrenched relationship between labor conflicts and the government unveiled. Labor disputes nationwide stirred fears of radicals infiltrating the working class. Fear of communism reached a fever pitch. At the end of 1919, coast-to-coast raids were conducted to jail suspected communists. In 1920, more than 4,000 suspected communist radicals were arrested in more than 33 cities in the United States (Goldberg, 1996). Government intervention in labor disputes increased but the concerns of laborers were often ignored. Labor unrest came to a head in 1920 and 1921 in southern West Virginia in the form of the now famous *Matewan Massacre* and subsequent *Battle of Blair Mountain,* where miners marched on nonunion mines only to be halted by the federal government and villainized by the coal industry. The rebellion at Blair Mountain ultimately failed and the union was crippled in the state, but these events changed the cultural landscape of West Virginia for generations. The violence aimed at mine operators, vertically up the industrial class hierarchy, of this time period remains vital in contemporary disputes over coal and serves as a rhetorical touchstone for both pro and antiMTR voices. The events – discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 – have since become key to understanding contemporary mining conflicts for those both in and outside the state.

Despite the marginalization of miners, this period was one of the most profitable in the state's history. While other states, such as Pennsylvania, saw declines in coal productions between the turn of the century and the 1930s, West Virginia experienced substantial increases, particularly in the southern part of the state (Trotter, 1990). The

violence and instability through the 1920s did nothing to slow production in West Virginia and in many ways strengthened the industry's grip on the state's economy and cultural identity. While violent protests and work disruptions did rock the state more than once during this time, they were ultimately mild inconveniences for a coal industry that was in the process of securing a dependent population and negotiating violence in a way that delegitimized local populations while giving mine operators increased power and authority over workers.

Creating an Icon

While the 1920s roared ahead, divisions in labor began to separate much of the country into various camps and loyalties (Bernstein, 2010), and class distinctions were becoming increasingly present and important in America. The mutual dependence of national political agendas, economic ebbs and flows, and the American imagination came into relief. The Great Depression of the 1930s brought about a number of federal programs designed to make poverty move visible, both literally and figuratively, bringing attention to poverty in the United States and launching government initiatives to protect the poor across the country.

The results of such initiatives were mixed for West Virginians. On one hand, the economic downturn brought the return of union mining to the state. In 1933, the UMWA finally gained real footing in West Virginia. The nation's New Deal mentality and the passage of the National Recovery Act in 1933 allowed the UMWA to establish its presence in the southern coalfields of the state, a presence they more or less lacked since the failed rebellion of 1921. In the same year, the UMWA also gained collective

bargaining rights. On the other hand, the Appalachian region's dependence on coal was such that a downturn in coal production meant many in the region had to turn to federal aid, further perpetuating the population's dependence and magnifying the association between the region and poverty. Over 47% of the mountain population in Appalachia was dependent on federal relief in the mid 1930s (Gray, 1936). Consequently, the Great Depression might have brought the final deathblow to mountain independence in Appalachia. According to Ronald Eller:

> Ironically, actions taken by the federal government in the 1930s further complicated the desperate conditions in the mountains. Not only did new social welfare legislation shift the region's dependency onto the federal government but expanded programs of land acquisition undertaken by the government also displaced hundreds of additional families from the land. When the Forest Service began to consolidate its holdings and when the Park Service and TVA condemned hundreds of family farms for parks and hydroelectric facilities, it appeared to many mountain residents that the government was delivering the final blow to the region's independence and traditional way of life. (1982, p. 240)

After the violence of the 1920s, the hard economic times of the 1930s furthered the complex and multifaceted powerlessness of Appalachian communities broadly and West Virginia communities specifically, solidifying the region's dependence on federal aid and absentee investment.

Not only were populations becoming dependent on government aid, but that aid also perpetuated stereotypes about the region, particularly stereotypes about dependence and poverty. Government intervention in the 1930s came with a literal increase in visibility with regard to low- and working-class people. Poverty stricken regions captured the imagination of urban and suburban America, specifically in the northeast. Journalists traveled to Appalachia and the rural south to report on, gaze at, and film poverty in America as part of the mentality cultivated by the New Deal. In an attempt to

muster up support for legislation designed to pull certain groups out of poverty, the very lives of people in rural America became an exhibit, jarring and sensationalized. Such sensationalism of poverty put the concrete realities that working- and lower class Appalachians faced in line with an American imagination invested in the ideal of progress and economic security. Anything that did not aesthetically align with middle- and upper class notions of what constituted civility would be organized as lower class and a less valuable way of living. During this time, Appalachian populations were being further defined and articulated within this framework.

In turn, the image of the dangerously inbred, violent, ignorant, and lazy rural hillbilly had become an American staple in this time period (Harkins, 2004). These images, made popular through cartoons, periodicals, and journals, largely ignored the economic and social configurations that bound the region to outside interests and strategically created dependent and often violent populations. The hillbilly caricature that had justified the acquisition of lands in the late 19th century was now being used to rationalize the poverty and backwardness in much of rural America, especially Appalachia, making sense of poverty as the result of an internal, cultural flaw (Eller, 1982). The Appalachian way of life, intentionally cultivated in the industrialization process, was now in many ways increasingly visible and clearly not aligned with the ideals of a *progressive* world. In other words, the forms of life that were cultivated in mining communities were now being used to frame the Appalachian region and its people as dependent and in need of a cultural savior. This is because their way of making sense of the world and acting within it was categorically othered, juxtaposed to ideals of progress that dictated what constituted an acceptable way of life in America at the time.

The dependence on the coal industry, created so carefully in the years leading up to the Great Depression, laid the groundwork for the region's working-class way of life to be translated simultaneously into political dependence and cultural stratification.

Ups and Downs: The Roller Coaster of Coal

Coming out of the Great Depression, conditions in some parts of Appalachia, and West Virginia more specifically, improved. Coal boomed in the late 1930s and early 1940s as World War II affected the global market. As in World War I, miners and operators alike were motivated to produce coal peacefully and for the good of the nation. Even before the United States officially entered the war, coal mining was growing to meet both domestic and global demands. Consequently, West Virginia saw an increase in strip mining, from only two companies practicing in 1938 to 41 companies practicing in 1942 (Burns, 2005). Furthermore, surface mining operations were first recorded in the state's Annual Reports in 1942 (WVminesafety.org), signaling its increase in importance to the industry as a whole and to general mining practices in the state. Coal production in West Virginia also increased tenfold between 1939 and 1943. The rise caused state legislators to amend 1939 regulations to account for the lack of enforcement, increasing financial penalties and tightening postmining reclamation standards; however, because little was done in the way of actually improving enforcement, the measures were mostly in vain (Montrie, 2003). As would become a pattern in the region, protecting miners was an agreeable idea in theory, but was rarely pursued with the same vigor in practice. This lack of protection is a prime example of how class is socialized with regard to progress and how this is disproportionately felt in low- and working-class communities. Even

when the law protects these populations, they remain at risk. Today, MTR discourses and conflicts remain indebted to this disconnect. Activists challenge and cite the lack of enforcement and the risk miners face as proof that the current state of the coal industry is dangerous and bad for West Virginia.

Through the 1940s, conditions in the mines and loss of employment once again brought tensions to a boiling point, this time creating a division between union leadership and the rank-and-file that would leave the future of coal miners in some question. From the late 1940s into the 1950s, a contentious conflict grew between miners and the federal government who supported mine operators. Labor disputes across the country were on the rise. On May 28, 1949 the federal government nulled important union contracts on the basis that the president of the UMWA had, on principal, not signed an anticommunist affidavit as part of the Taft-Hartly Act. A rift began to swell between the union rank-and-file – who wanted decisive strikes – and union leadership who continued to compromise and call for partial strikes. Wildcat strikes began across Appalachia, many starting in northern West Virginia, and western mines began striking as an act of solidarity with their Appalachian counterparts. A general strike began later that year and lasted into 1950.

The strike ended with a nationwide contract between the industry and the UMWA. Crucial to the contract was the tradeoff of higher wages and benefits for union members in exchange for technological innovation for the industry. While union members gained immediate benefits, the industry was effectively licensed to continue on a trajectory that decreased employment and increased the risks miners faced. According to Robert Gottleib (1993), “the unimpeded introduction of machinery into the mines

intensified exposure to certain hazards while also instituting more specialization, an increased division of labor, and a reduced labor force" (p. 279). The coal industry ultimately scored a huge win in the continued cultivation of a population that increasingly depended on mining while simultaneously being phased out of the mining process. The agreement allowed the industry to pursue the means of reducing employment, and placed miners and mining communities at greater physical risk, reflecting rifts between populations that are justified so long as industrialization and progress are mutually articulated *goods*. For example, as a result of coal dust in the air due to the increased mechanization of mining, cases of respiratory problems increased in the 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, this agreement advanced industry practices across the nation that established the increasing rarity of employment in an industry once counted on to provide jobs in places like central and southern West Virginia. This rarity informs and vitalizes the rhetorical vilification of environmentalism and reinforces the division between labor and environmental movements.

The industry's goal of dividing and conquering the workforce and unions also advanced. Though the conflict ended with a contract on March 3, 1950, the split between union leadership and miners had widened:

> The gulf separating [UMWA President] Lewis from the rank-and-file is seen not only in the differences between what Lewis settled for and what the miners wanted, but also in the continuation of the 1949-50 strike in the wildcat strikes that erupted in the next year, 1951, when the miners in northern West Virginia demanded comprehensive seniority rights…. What the miners feared came true immediately: the continuous miner ushered in thousands of layoffs. Miners with as little as a week on the job were kept working, while others with as much as 30-40 years were fired. (Phillips, 1984, p. 31)

Relations between the union and the rank-and-file were damaged, particularly in West Virginia. While the mechanization of labor took a gigantic step forward, competition for

mining jobs was getting fiercer and conditions were getting worse, reflecting the devaluation of the miner and the mining community. Workers were more vulnerable than ever as union protection waivered. Additionally, the labor disputes of 1949 and 1950 were born out of America's fear of communism, a fear that to some extent pushed aside more substantive political and rhetorical engagement with class in the United States. Miners were being placed at greater long-term physical and financial risk, while the coal industry gained the needed footing to continue its growth as the central industry in the state.

Furthering the Gap

The late 1950s brought another economic valley in the region and with it, like clockwork, came renewed attention to Appalachia and its people. Economic conditions worsened as coal employment predictably dropped due to increased mechanization of the mining process and the deterioration of union protection. The physical living conditions of many of those in Appalachia went into deep decline as well. The term "hillbilly" – already strongly associated with Appalachians – became a more commonly accepted pejorative for the rural poor during President Johnson's "War on Poverty". Though associations with violence and backward living were cultivated decades earlier, it was in the 1960s when Appalachian Whites truly came to represent a crucial cultural boundary for middle-class America (Mason, 2005) in the way it is understood today. This was partially due to how government programs that were part of the War on Poverty framed Appalachians as outsiders as a result of their economic conditions. According to John Gaventa (1982):

> In 1967 a National Advisory Committee on Rural Poverty headed by Governor Breathitt of Kentucky included a section on Appalachia in its report *The People Left Behind.* 'For all practical purposes', it said, 'most of the 14 million poor in our poverty areas are outside our market economy…. They are on the outside looking in and they need our help'.
> 'Help' adopted a strategy of attempting to integrate the poverty areas into the national economy, i.e. trying to find ways for the rural poor to 'catch up' with the metropolitan areas. (p. 127)

The framing of Appalachian people – coded as natural and authentic but also primitive and backward – became a way of reinforcing the values that were present and normal in middle-class culture but absent in the *backward* working- and lower class people of Appalachia. Consequently, during this time the economic conditions of Appalachia's suffering populations became sutured to the region's legibility in the American imagination. Once again, the concrete conditions of class, and specifically poverty, were linked to how these populations were divided and stratified along lines of value, because both processes were indebted to the privileging of industrial progress and capitalism.

As working-class Appalachian populations continued to struggle in the 1960s, political and media attention as well as the use of strip mining continued to increase. Strip mining increased steadily from 1962 forward, and by the end of the decade it was central to West Virginia's mining industry. The increased use of strip mining in the face of economic decline, as was the case 30 years earlier, caused lawmakers to revisit legislative checks on strip mining. In 1967, a regulatory act was passed that made West Virginia's laws against strip mining some of the strictest in Appalachia. Legislation was designed to limit the practice's effects on the natural beauty of the state and its people. Once again, legislative action failed at the point of enforcement and strip mining continued to grow in West Virginia (Montrie, 2003). West Virginia, as a physical place, and its people were not protected in practice, even when they were in theory. The coal

industry and the continued need to move forward in the name of progress silently trumped such protection, clearing the way for strip mining to be taken to the next level, MTR.

As discussed in Chapter 1, MTR as we know it today was introduced to the state in 1970. The increased mechanization of mining and the expanding size of mining projects had its effect not only on miners, but on the state as a whole, so much so that West Virginia came close to abolishing surface mining in 1971. During the 1971 legislative session, a bill to abolish surface mining was proposed in response to increased concerns over the environmental and economic impacts of strip mining in the state. Many politicians, miners, activists, academics, and otherwise concerned citizens voiced concerns over the employment of out-of-state and specialized laborers for surface mining projects and the reduced need for miners in general in surface mining. For example, West Virginia's Secretary of State at the time, John D. Rockefeller, claimed, "I am concerned about jobs… but I might note that one reason stripping is so profitable is that it has a low employment factor relative to deep mining" (cited in Montrie, 2003, p. 116). Frustrations grew with the myriad failures and repeated lack of enforcement of the control measures designed to regulate surface mining, making abolition a hot-button issue in the early 1970s. However, the UMWA opposed the legislation, continuing the pattern of distrust between the union and its rank-and-file members in West Virginia, who focused attention on jobs for state residents while the union attempted to maintain its relations with the mining industry more broadly. Ultimately, abolition was defeated, but the groundwork was laid for strong grassroots activist networks (Montrie, 2003) that

came together against strip mining to fill the void of protection left by state and federal governments as well as the UMWA.

Butting Heads: A Modern David and Goliath

The 1980s and 1990s laid the groundwork for the conflicts in question here. Massey Energy emerged as the face of MTR, at least in part because of Don Blankenship's dogged emphasis on ridding his mines of unions and improving the bottom line. Conversely, the CRMW was born in many ways from the tensions between the coal industry and the increasingly industry-sympathetic UMWA, due in large part to Massey's tactics for spurring growth in the region. This section lays out the development of these two entities in relation to the ongoing socialization of class in the region, and then analyzes some of the most important episodes and dynamics of MTR conflicts from the early/mid-2000s to the early 2010s.

Massey's true rise to the prominence it enjoyed in the 2000s was due in large part to its emphasis on minimizing labor costs and maximizing their control over their workforce, beginning with the systematic crippling of unions in the state. In 1984, Massey informed the UMWA that all its mine operations were run as separate companies, requiring each to negotiate with the union individually. This allowed Massey simply to close any mine that remained union until union contracts expired, sectioning off and minimizing the company's losses from labor disputes. This put union workers out of jobs and rewarded nonunion workers, discouraging large-scale, multimine strikes. It also ensured that as one subsidiary granted slightly better terms to a union, other subsidiaries would grow to resent their counterparts and the union as a whole, encouraging conflict

among working-class individuals and communities. This resolution became known as The Massey Doctrine (Shnayerson, 2008) and was central in reducing worker protection, as well as effecting the shift from a vertical conflict between miners and miner operators to a horizontal conflict between working-class communities and families. Mining companies have pitted communities and family members against one another since the turn of the 20th century, modifying the orientation of labor conflicts in the region from a dispute between worker and operators to a dispute among working-class families. Massey was instrumental in perpetuating that shift into the 21st century.

In protest of The Massey Doctrine, a strike was called in 1984. Massey hired private contractors to protect mines and company officials. Don Blankenship was only an accountant at the time, but was already exceedingly active in the company's fight against union workers. For his troubles, Blankenship was a marked man. He was shot at more than once, required an armored vehicle to move through the state, and reportedly never slept in the same place more than two nights in a row (Shnayerson, 2008). Blankenship's commitment to ridding the company of unions paid off. The UMWA caved to Massey's terms in 1985, and seven years later, Don Blankenship became the first nonMassey family member to be named president and chairman of the company's board.

Massey Energy gained a great deal of momentum at the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s; coal experienced an upswing in West Virginia. A series of events and dynamics came together to make West Virginia a highly desirable place to mine coal, even more so than it had been in previous years, meaning mining was expanding in the state just as Blankenship rose to power. In the latter part of the 1980s, tax breaks that had

passed a decade earlier began to take their toll on the state's economy while increasing the appeal of West Virginia in the eyes of energy companies. These breaks cost the state approximately $600,000 in 1985, but that number jumped to more than $48 million by 1989 (Burns, 2005); West Virginia became a tax- and regulation-friendly state for coal mining. Additionally, amendments to the Clean Air Act (CAA) in 1990 inadvertently brought more mining to West Virginia. These amendments set new regulations on air pollution, focusing on sulfur emissions. This forced coal companies to choose between adopting expensive technology that would reduce sulfur emissions and mining low sulfur coal. Southern West Virginia's low sulfur coal seams became the most attractive in the country (Shnayerson, 2008), "producing 50% more energy per pound than Western coal" (Fox, 1999, p. 165).

In response to these trends, Don Blankenship and Massey Energy aggressively bought up union mines in the 1990s and expanded operations at an alarming rate. Their expansion came with brash displays of authority. For example, Massey bought a mine in Montcoal, West Virginia in the Coal River Valley, a predominantly underground mine at the time, in the early 1990s. The underground mine was shut down until union contracts expired. In 1994 when the contract was up Massey opened Marsh Fork Coal in its place and started strip mining in the Coal River Valley. Massey also took over mining in Shumate Branch in the Coal River Valley in 1994. In this case, Massey gated off parts of the hollow after expelling the last of the residents, and posted guards to protect Massey mines and property. These guards dressed like police officers, carried weapons, and used surveillance equipment. Some local residents filed charges against the mine guards for allegedly pulling guns on, physically attacking, and transporting them against their will

(Shnayerson, 2008). Massey Energy effectively used their private guards to exert authority and – in the eyes of some – intimidate anyone who questioned their reign.

During the 1990s, the UMWA often stood against large-scale strip mining practices, but became increasingly unreliable defenders of miners' rights and best interests as the decade went on, forcing many miners and activists to turn toward grassroots activism to fight injustices in mining. Cecil Roberts took over as president of the UMWA in 1996, and until 1999 he spoke out against MTR and economic disparities associated with the mining industry. For example, in 1999, on Kayford Mountain, a gathering point of sorts for many antiMTR activists, Roberts claimed:

> For too long now, friends, we have seen our money go to New York, through Wall Street, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, St. Louis, that's where the money off Cabin Creek has gone. I suggest to you it's about time the people in West Virginia stood up and said enough is enough is enough! We've had it. (cited in Gibson, 2007)

Later Roberts went on to contend:

> The UMWA strongly believes that coal companies should not be permitted to destroy local communities in the process of mountaintop removal mining, including by blasting. Community residents with homes and farms should be protected from the consequences of such damage. (cited in Burns, 2005, p. 29)

Taking a stance against the destruction of MTR, Roberts focused on local communities and the harms done to homes and farms.

Later in 1999, Roberts and the UMWA changed their tune in response to a landmark case that challenged coal companies who found loopholes in the laws to create bigger and vaster mining projects while avoiding stricter regulation and oversight. At the tail end of 1998, Judge Charles Haden II heard the landmark case *Bragg vs. Robertson* (Haden, 1998). *Bragg vs. Robertson* effectively halted operation at Arch Coal's Dal-Tex mine above Blair, West Virginia and would draw the ire of the UMWA. The mine

employed 387 union miners at the time (Burns, 2005) and had also been the subject of Penny Loeb's (1997) *U.S. News and World Report* article a year earlier, highlighting the destruction of MTR. Local lawyer Joe Lovett and Washington D.C. environmental lawyer Jim Hecker led local residents (among them Patricia Bragg, one of the case's namesakes) in suing federal regulatory authorities, including the Department of Environmental Protection and local offices of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. The group claimed that the agencies had violated a number of federal laws, particularly those in the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, when issuing permits to Arch Coal. Arch Coal split the massive project into smaller segments and acquired the less regulated Nationwide 21 permits, effectively getting permission for a massive MTR project in the guise of smaller, closely clustered projects. Massey Energy and other mining companies also used this tactic. After flying over the MTR mines in question, Judge Haden II ruled on March 3, 1999 that the MTR permits were indeed illegally granted. The UMWA vocally rejected *Bragg vs Robertson*. The president of District 17 (the district Dal-Text sat in), Bob Phalen, spoke out against the decision, citing the potential economic effects and accusing *extremists* of attempting to destroy the lives of working miners (Myers, 1999). Effectively, the UMWA had turned their attention and malice away from the coal industry and toward community members who spoke out against the damages of MTR.

As the union allied itself with the coal industry, grassroots activism continued to gain momentum as an outlet for local frustrations over MTR. The CRMW was born from this frustration. Just prior to the Haden decision and the UMWA's outcry, Randy Sprouse, an out-of-work underground union miner, started the CRMW in 1998 with Freda Williams, daughter and granddaughter of union miners. The group was designed,

at least initially, to raise concerns over people losing their homes and jobs to the coal industry in the Coal River Valley, where Massey Energy was expanding its influence. In response to the UMWA's support of MTR, Sprouse wrote a letter to the editor in the *Charleston Gazette*:

> After 18 years I had to go out of state to work for minimum wage, and there was no media campaign by the United Mine Workers of America to save my job. It sounds as if the loss of these few hundred jobs will break the UMWA. If an effort this strong had been made to save all the underground jobs, the union would not be in this condition. (Sprouse, 1999, p. 4A)

Here, Sprouse calls out the UMWA for the hypocrisy of their outcry over certain mines and certain jobs while leaving others unprotected, pointing to his own hardships as a miner and laborer to illustrate the disproportionate institutional protection that underground miners have and had compared to the coal industry's use of MTR more broadly. In so doing, he also highlights the true motivations of the UMWA's actions, the profitability and protection of the coal industry in West Virginia.

The CRMW started as (and continues to be) a truly grassroots organization, with limited resources and localized influence. Williams maintained her work for the organization on a pension she received as the widow of a union miner, while Sprouse owned a small tavern in Sundial, West Virginia. Union organization had a rich history of relying on small taverns in the state, and Sprouse's bar became a hot spot for antimining public discord, in turn becoming a threat to the local influence of mining in the valley. Massey Energy ultimately bought Sprouse's bar and the land it stood on. According to Shnayerson (2008), conflicting rumors exist regarding why Sprouse sold the bar. Some cite financial troubles, while others cite his wife's desire to escape the stress of being an activist's wife. Regardless, the terms of the contract dictated that Massey owned the bar

and the land, while Sprouse was forced to move at least 100 miles from Sundial, West Virginia and could not speak ill of Massey in public again. The bar was torn down and the land abandoned. Massey had all but acknowledged the threat activism posed in the region, while setting its sights on grassroots activism and discord in the state.

The early/mid-2000s to early 2010s saw a number of circumstances that exacerbated the public debate over MTR and highlighted the socialization of class in Appalachia. First, Massey continued to expand, particularly in the Coal River Valley. By 2000, Massey subsidiary companies built three large coal slurry impoundments in the Coal River Valley, one of which was Brushy Fork. Brushy Fork was, for a time, the largest coal slurry impoundment in the state, containing eight billion gallons of slurry and rising to 920 feet (Shnayerson, 2008). These impoundments loomed over communities and threatened to wipe out anything below should they break like others had done before. Additionally, under the Bush administration attempts were made to simplify MTR's permit process. In 2001, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Judge Haden's 1999 ruling, making it easier for coal companies to circumvent more rigid regulatory oversight. It was overturned based on the decision that citizens did not have the right to sue state regulators over a failure to enforce the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. The administration also took steps to change definitions of key words such as "fill," which was once defined as materials dumped in valleys that could benefit the land in some way, but was changed to include anything that had the effect of *filling*, including coal waste. Definitional changes allowed mining companies to dump excess dirt with little to no regard for reclamation of the land in or around the mining site. Mining

communities were increasingly placed in harm's way, but grassroots organizations such as the CRMW were responding loudly to these manifestations of class.

Marsh Fork Elementary

In the early 2000s, in the face of these political and economic shifts that favored the coal industry, the CRMW needed a catalyst for change, something that condensed and focused their grievances with the coal industry. Marsh Fork Elementary School provided that catalyst. Marsh Fork Elementary was a small elementary school that once sat just outside of Whitesville, West Virginia, responsible for approximately 250 students. Across from this school sat Goals Coal, a Massey Energy subsidiary prep plant with an impoundment that held 200 million gallons of coal waste. Just as concerning, Massey put a coal silo that stood over 100 feet tall just 300 feet away from the school. Not surprisingly, the proximity to coal and the variety of hazardous chemicals used in the mining and cleaning process affected the school children. They reported a variety of physical ailments, including diarrhea, headaches, nausea, and respiratory problems (Shnayerson, 2008). Symptoms had been reported earlier, but increased in frequency in 2003, the year the silo was built. In most cases, chronically sick children from the school *miraculously* got better once they graduated and went to middle school, miles away from the prep plant.

Ed Wiley, a 47-year-old grandfather of a girl who attended Marsh Fork Elementary, began questioning the chemicals Massey used to spray the coal at the nearby plant in 2004. He took his concerns directly to the school. Wiley's anxieties shocked the principal of the school, Theresa Lewis, who insisted the school's water was tested

monthly. She asserted that the water and air were both safe and that she trusted the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and their assessment of the plant. School opened as scheduled in the fall, but Wiley was not satisfied. For both Wiley and the CRMW, Marsh Fork Elementary presented an unacceptable situation, a case where the devaluation of local populations and the violence of capital explicitly affected children. Marsh Fork Elementary became central to the conflict over MTR in the state, highlighting the impunity coal companies enjoyed at the time, the challenges local populations faced because of strip mining, and the way industrial progress had licensed the entire dynamic.

The conflict surrounding the school escalated in 2005. Don Blankenship and Massey Energy applied for a permit for a second silo, this one even closer to the school. That summer, local activists attempted to draw attention to the school in varied ways. Through the summer, Governor Joe Manchin and his staff met with members of the CRMW a number of times, expressing their concern over the issue and assuring activists they would look into their complaints regarding Marsh Fork Elementary. Still, the DEP approved Massey's application for a second silo in June of that year. Furthermore, the department approved measures to extend the impoundment that loomed over the valley and the school (Shnayerson, 2008). Ed Wiley took matters into his own hands and escalated pressure on Governor Manchin and the DEP. Wiley went to the state capitol in Charleston, West Virginia on July 5, 2005 and asked to speak to Governor Manchin about the silo (Jarrell, 2011). Wiley's trip became anything but a simple meeting:

> The governor, as it turned out, had too busy a schedule to speak with Ed again. That was fine, Ed told the staff person who gave him the news. He could wait. Ed went out to the steps of the capitol and began to wait. After a few hours reporters and television crews, alerted to his vigil, came over to hear him out. "I

> want the governor to explain to me why Massey Energy's profits are more important than these kids' health and safety," Ed told them. "Where is the governor's heart? Where is his loyalty?
> "I have been to the governor's office," he added. "That didn't help. I want him to come out here and explain how he's going to fix this problem that could have been prevented with a phone call." (Shnayerson, 2008, p. 140)

Only minutes after seeing Wiley on the six o'clock news, Manchin sent for the concerned grandfather.

Wiley and Manchin met for some time that day. At the end of the meeting, Manchin agreed to have a team made up of members from multiple agencies test the water and air around Marsh Fork Elementary in the next few days. Machin also promised Wiley and other members of the CRMW a meeting with Stephanie Timmermeyer, head of the DEP at the time. On July 7, the inspectors went to work at Marsh Fork Elementary, and representatives of the DEP met with the CRMW (Jarrell, 2011). The inspection was performed with no concerned members of the community present and no tests were administered for coal dust or airborne toxins. Those directly affected by the environmental degradation, the rifts putting them at risk, were removed from the process. Though CRMW representatives and other concerned citizens were assured that the state government was taking the issue seriously, the exclusion raised concerns about the thoroughness of the test, as did the lack of detailed results, which failed to include particulate count units and measurements ("The long road to victory," 2011).

Such exclusions, and more importantly the suspicions they raise, reflect a history of forced dependence and distrust. Local residents did not trust the state government to conduct thorough tests, and their distrust was a product of the state's history of protecting and valuing industry at the expense of the state's population. Here, the importance of progress to the cultivation of the rhetorical landscape and the demarcation of value is

seen in the reluctance of state agencies to investigate the school (reflecting habitual negligence to environmental health concerns), the refusal of the state to include members of the community (reflecting the devaluation of their opinions), and the distrust of community members (reflecting a clear suspicion that agencies designed to protect citizens cannot be counted on to do so). Such trust is not lost overnight, but is the product of years of local populations being devalued, and that devaluation's manifesting itself as exposure to exploitation and the state's inability (or unwillingness) to protect these communities.

In response to the questionable testing, Wiley, along with Judy Bonds and Jack Spadaro, met with members of the DEP. Spadaro was a former engineer for the Mine Safety and Health Administration under the Clinton administration and part of the group that investigated the Martin County, Kentucky coal slurry spill of 2000. He was the dissenting voice against whitewashing Massey's negligence once the Bush administration took over and moved to close the case. Spadaro detailed how the impoundment near the elementary school was designed in the same way as the one that flooded Buffalo Creek, speaking from experience, as investigating the Buffalo Creek disaster was one of his first government assignments (House & Howard, 2009). He expressed concerns over the impoundment's stability should it be expanded. The DEP listened, but offered little response, trusting their inspectors to report any serious problems (Shnayerson, 2008).

The proposal of a second silo demonstrated just how brash Massey Energy had become and how resourceful the CRMW had to be. Two months before the permit for the second silo was issued, Massey literally broke ground on the foundation, which was complete at the time of the permit's approval. To break ground before the permit was

granted was on its face illegal, but this was explained away by saying that digging was not technically part of the construction process. While the CRMW and other concerned members of the community marched, wrote letters, and sat outside the governor's office until granted a meeting, Massey Energy carried on, unconcerned about local outrage or the possibility that it might change the course of their business.

Massey's arrogant disregard for the law ultimately provided a break for the CRMW and others concerned with the school. Ken Ward Jr., an experienced journalist of coal-related stories and writer for the *Charleston Gazette,* got a call one day from a government official telling him he might be interested in Goals Coal's maps. Upon investigation, Ward and another reporter found that the property line between the Massey plant and the school – according to the Massey subsidiary – had slowly migrated toward the school over time. First, the property line moved to accommodate the original silo. It moved again to accommodate the second proposed silo. Massey had moved its property lines to build silos on property that was not theirs. In response to the discovery, on July 15th the West Virginia DEP ordered work on the second silo to halt until a full investigation could be carried out (Jarrell, 2011).

Don Blankenship was furious, reflecting the power and free reign coal companies had become accustomed to in the region. Blankenship likened the offense to going one mile over the speed limit and expressed concern that Massey was the only coal company being cited for something he contended all companies were doing. The coal tycoon turned his ire to Governor Manchin, who had once claimed that Blankenship's increased involvement in public issues would earn him increased scrutiny. Blankenship, citing such remarks, framed the investigation into the property lines as a violation of his

freedom of speech. The DEP's decision to suspend construction of the second silo, he contended, was punishment for his political associations and outspokenness in the state. Blankenship sued Manchin for $300 million in damages over the so-called suppression of his First Amendment rights. Blankenship's response highlighted how little regard Massey Energy had for the state, its laws, and its people. He not only blatantly broke the law to build on property that did not belong to Massey; he asserted the backlash against him as an erosion of his rights to pursue profit and political sway in the state, reflecting a long history of the coal industry's interest in holding prominence in the state.

Despite the clear arrogance of Massey and growing concern for the school children's health, the school remained where it stood and little was done in the way of addressing the concerns of the community. In 2006, the CRMW, recognizing the growing rift between their own concerns and that of the state, took two new approaches. First, the group started the Pennies of Promise campaign. The CRMW members took over 80 pounds of pennies to the state capital to declare the beginning of their campaign to raise the money for a new school themselves (Shnayerson, 2008). Pennies of Promise was framed as a direct response to the lack of government protection. According to the CRMW's brochure for the movement,

> Pennies of Promise is a grassroots effort comprised of local citizens of the Coal River Valley, WV, and other concerned fellow Appalachians. In the absence of help from our elected officials we have looked to each other for support. ("Pennies of Promise," n.d.)

Another part of the brochure reads, "The School Board is not listening. The Governor is not listening. We will make them hear us!" ("Pennies of Promise," n.d.). The CRMW explicitly recognized that government officials and agencies had abandoned them in favor of the coal industry over the region's children and their health.

Pennies of Promise was more effective in making a statement than it was in actually building a new school. The group would need to raise about $5 million to complete its stated goals. Activists could not very well take bags of pennies to the capital every week to keep the effort in the public eye, and even if they did it would eventually lose its impact. The CRMW needed another way to keep attention on the issue. In response, Ed Wiley took up a second tactic. He walked from Charleston, West Virginia to Washington, D.C. in the summer of 2006 to confront Robert C. Byrd directly about the issue. Byrd was the most senior member of the U.S. Senate at the time and far and away West Virginia's most powerful politician. Wiley walked over 450 miles in just under six weeks. The walk ended in a meeting, but ultimately led to very little in terms of immediate action, though it did attract some national attention to the dangers of MTR and the threat faced by the children of Marsh Folk Elementary. Wiley's walk and Pennies of Promise's effort put Marsh Fork Elementary on the local – and to a lesser extent national – map. Then and now, they highlight the need for local populations in central and southern West Virginia to creatively fight against the harmful effects of MTR in the face of inadequate government protection, because of the undergirding devaluation of the land and people there.

Mountain Justice and Backlash

The CRMW and other activists also used Marsh Fork Elementary to expand attention to the region more generally. In the summer of 2005, Judy Bonds and fellow activist Bo Webb organized the first *Mountain Justice Summer*, a summer retreat to raise awareness, connect and train activists, and organize direct action campaigns. The group

was active in connecting with other environmental groups at both the regional and national level. It was made up of more than 150 members at its peak, a mix of local residents and college-age environmental activists from around the country. One of the first actions the group took was to march from Marsh Fork Elementary to the door of the Goals Prep plant. As soon as Judy Bonds and Bo Webb, local leaders of the marchers, stepped onto Goals property, they were promptly arrested. Mountain Justice Summer would return a week later to chant and sing protest songs. Again, some activists attempted to deliver a list of demands to Goals, and this time 16 arrests were made.

The group continued to fight for a new elementary school, but also used its momentum to fight MTR elsewhere. For example, Mountain Justice Summer took their protests to Sylvester, West Virginia that summer, where acute concerns over air quality existed. Protestors set out to "Challenge Massey to be a Community Partner not Corporate Outlaw" ("Coalfield Residents, MJ trace Massey's trail of destruction," 2005). Counter-protestors confronted the marchers. According to Mountain Justice:

> After a few minutes of chanting and insults, the counter-protestors, holding signs like "Ink, Pink, You stink", "Got soap", and "Go home, outsiders," quieted down. Residents protesting mountain top removal, along with their supporters, then rose, sang Amazing Grace and marched away with their fists in the air". ("Coalfield Residents, MJ trace Massey's trail of destruction," 2005)

Two days later, Mountain Justice put on a "Living Community Fair" at Marsh Fork Elementary, where, according to Mountain Justice, heated confrontation between protestors and detractors turned into open dialogue.

These protests are of particular interest for two reasons. First, they reflect a uniquely small-town, rural dynamic between protest and the media. According to Shnayerson (2008), "Almost anywhere else, the three days of marches would have been

meaningless: a wavy, narrow line of seventy-five or one hundred people upset about something, forgotten as soon as they passed out of sight. Here the marchers were news" (p. 167). Even relatively small protests become focal points of media attention in rural communities. They reverberate through the community with more intensity and contribute loudly to the public discourse on a given issue, reflecting how Marsh Fork gave the CRMW an opportunity to expand MTR conflicts.

Second, these protest demonstrate the importance of community and the value of being marked as an insider in this context. Many of the protestors involved in Mountain Justice were indeed *outsiders* from other states, coming to protest MTR. Bonds herself was said not to really know what to make of the activists, who often wore their hair long and went by names such as "Squirrel" and "America" (Shnayerson, 2008). Many young activists who had converged on West Virginia stood out next to their local counterparts. Their mere identity as outsiders with the aesthetics to match was enough reason to dismiss them in many people's minds. The limited geographic and social mobility that often accompanies rural life leads in many ways to an intense and exclusionary notion of community and legitimacy. Politicians, social and community figures, religious leaders, and other voices of authority work hard to negotiate their own identity publically, so as to ensure they are not marked and conceptualized as outsiders, a phenomenon that will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

A Dangerous Practice

In 2006, mining safety came into focus and provided another opportunity for activists and mining companies to butt heads. That year, the Sago Mine in Upshire

County – sitting in the northeastern edge of central West Virginia – collapsed and trapped 13 miners. Media reports initially stated that 12 of the 13 miners were found alive, but those reports were tragically wrong and in fact only one miner survived the accident. According to Carolyn Kitch (2007), national and international media accounts of the event, which drew substantial attention to the rural region, relied heavily on conventional framings of local populations, particularly with regard to gender. The Sago Mine disaster captured national attention and raised serious concerns about mining in the region.

Four years later, another explosion rocked Massey's Upper Big Branch mine in Montcoal, West Virginia, killing 29 of 31 present miners the day after Easter (Page et al., n.d.). An independent investigation found that Massey Energy had failed to follow basic safety procedures and were at fault for the explosion (McAteer, 2011). Once again, mining drew the ire of the public as local and national questions were raised over the safety of coal mining. This did little to deter coal's influence in the state, but the incident reminded local communities that mining was still a dangerous business and that the billion-dollar companies running the mines were doing little to protect them. Many antiMTR activists today were once strong coal supporters. For example, following the death of her brother in a mining accident, Betty Harrah changed from vehemently supporting the coal industry to working with environmental activists to find economic alternatives to coal. Harrah's emotional story is detailed in the documentary *Overburden* (Stevens, 2015).

This lack of safety and disregard for regulations brings the socialization of class into focus. Many mining companies consciously avoided safety measures in the name of cost cutting, valuing profits over people. What is worse, these jobs that were so highly

coveted for their financial benefits in an otherwise bleak West Virginia economy were not only dangerous, they were more dangerous than they needed to be due to the explicit lack of attention to safety. The mining industry long ago achieved a dynamic in the region where locals competed for a handful of dangerous jobs, then ultimately thanked the company for the opportunity and defended it against activist critique. That dynamic holds today, where concerns over MTR as an economically, culturally, and environmentally destructive practice are framed within commitments to coal as a necessary way of life in the region, a commitment that holds significant rhetorical weight despite the readily apparent dangers of the practice.

While trepidations about mining swelled around the country, activists worked to encourage alternative economic and energy solutions for the state, and perhaps no alternative to coal has been more provocative and more decisive than wind energy. The CRMW was active in promoting wind energy in West Virginia, supporting wind turbines in Greenbrier County in 2006 and in Raleigh County in 2008. In 2006, the group supported Invenergy – a Chicago-based energy company – in its plan to build 124 electric turbines on mountain ridges near Rupert, a town in Greenbrier County. The proposal, and the argument over the turbines particularly, bring the class dynamics of MTR into stark relief. Greenbrier County is home to the Greenbrier Hotel, at one time one of the most famous in the country. While some of its luster has been lost in the age of global travel and decadent, record-setting high-rises, The Greenbrier Hotel remains a landmark of luxury in the state. It has hosted 26 presidents and is home to a declassified bunker that served as a secret relocation site for Congress in the event of a national emergency ("The Greenbrier: America's Resort," 2015).

This prestige and the need to protect the beauty of the Greenbrier region was on full display in debates over the wind farm where Greenbrier area residents argued against the proposed wind farm because it would ruin their viewshed. In 2006, CRMW representatives went to Greenbrier County to explain and defend the proposed wind farm, where they were met with a barrage of arguments, not against wind energy, but against the placement of turbines in areas that are associated with affluence. Those who argued against the wind energy plan were able to make appeals to the beautiful scenery, because Greenbrier County is seen as an attraction for affluent business people and politicians. The aesthetic destruction of one county is thus on a higher argumentative plane than the permanent destruction of another. These sorts of "not in my backyard" arguments are common, but they take on a special class relevance when considered in the historical context here. Coal communities not only do not have the luxury of such arguments (not to the extent that they would hold any water politically), but they are also put in a position to argue *for* placing destructive practices in their backyards.

In many ways, the fight over turbines in Greenbrier County was between likeminded groups who wished to protect the mountains of West Virginia, but these groups suffered the effects of MTR and in turn the socialization of class quite differently. For example, in a letter to the editor, April Crowe of Trout, West Virginia framed opponents to wind turbines as antiMTR:

> Mountaintop removal people should not be against our "grassroots group" for fighting to save our mountains (we hate mountaintop removal too!). We all need to pay the true cost of energy. What are our forests, streams and rivers, air and wildlife worth in dollars? Incalculable. To think "green" energy will somehow save us and fix our past transgressions is the same naive and wishful thinking that got America into the mess we are in. Wind turbines on every last mountain in West Virginia will not halt mountaintop removal. It will only destroy the remaining rugged and pastoral beauty our state has become known for. We, the

> "few" thousands of Greenbrier County, and the other thousands fighting the blight of wind turbines and mountaintop removal are sick to death of just "tolerating," as the Gazette says we should. Don't demean us for loving a "view," bats, birds, peace and quiet. We stand to say "The buck stops here!" (Crowe, 2006, p. 4A).

Crowe frames wind energy as a compromise that cannot be tolerated. A compromise that, like MTR, masks the true cost of energy in the United States, a cost that is disproportionately placed on rural communities in the United States. The cost placed on Greenbrier is conflated with the cost placed on southern West Virginia's coalfields, which is clearly a misleading conflation. The damage done to lands and people in communities that MTR directly affects is far greater than what would be done by placing wind turbines on a ridge, reflecting a certain level of privilege assumed by those in Greenbrier County.

The privileged rhetorical position of those in Greenbrier County was on full display elsewhere as well. State delegate Tom Campbell from Greenbrier County declared that the proposed location would be the absolute *worst place* for the wind turbines in the entire state, citing its negative effects on the five-star hotel and sporting club when he spoke at a Public Service commission hearing on the matter (Eyre, 2006). Additionally, a local nursery owner in Greenbrier, Barry Glick, at the same hearing stated, "This project will ruin virtually every aspect of Greenbrier County. I'd be glad to work with Beech Ridge to find another place for these wind turbines" (cited in Eyre, 2006, p. 1C). Both Campbell and Glick insisted that the wind turbines themselves are not an issue, but they cannot and should not interfere with the beauty and appeal of Greenbrier County. This sort of privileging is not exclusive to Greenbrier. It is indicative of a broader and silent dismissal of more isolated parts of the state that have in many ways come to represent the larger social salience of Appalachia. For example, in 2007 a local

Huntington, West Virginia woman voiced concerns in an editorial over MTR projects proposed in tourism-friendly parts of the state, something she thought impossible even though she recognized the practice in other parts of the state (Bady, 2007).

Arguments for the turbines drove home the ill-founded concerns of Greenbrier residents and representatives. Representatives of Invenergy claimed that the hotel's guests would not even be able to see the turbines from their vantage point. Additionally, Patrick Mann, a professor at West Virginia University, claimed there was no evidence that property values would drop as a result of the wind turbines. Even the county commissioner at the time, Brad Tuckwiller, supported the turbine proposal, citing that the turbine's noise reminded him of wind moving through trees (Eyre, 2006). What is more, beyond the aesthetic standards disproportionately holding weight in different parts of the state, the harms being discussed are not equal in terms of longevity. As one Charleston resident put it, "the wind turbines can be dismantled and removed, leaving behind no traces of their existence. The long-term economic, social and environmental effects of mountaintop removal are there forever – a scar that cannot be easily erased" (Bailey, 2007, p. 4A). The rhetorical footing that each location stands on reflects the devaluation of coal communities in the state. Cultural and environmental destruction in one part of the state, a part much more widely associated with Appalachian and West Virginia culture, is rhetorically licensed, built into the way people are arguing about the wind turbines and the history they implicitly tap into. Conversely, the land even near an institution of affluence is protected from relatively minor inconveniences.

Activists from the CRMW focused on the implicit and explicit dimensions of class animating this argument, lucidly describing the politics of such distinctions. Janice

Nease argued at a public hearing on wind energy in Greenbrier County:

> A wind farm may alter a viewshed, but mountaintop removal threatened our very survival… I'm sorry if we can't get too excited about your viewshed. You should see what we have as a viewshed. The mountains have been totally destroyed day by day. (cited in Eyre, 2006, p. 4A)

Patty Sebok put it more bluntly; "These people don't give a damn about us, they just want their viewshed" (cited in Eyre, 2006, p. 4A). Nease and Sebok addressed the material distinction between the two populations and the privilege inherent in it. The concerns of more rural populations in West Virginia, particularly those in traditional mining centers in the central and southern part of the state, are of less value in this debate than those in other areas because central and southern West Virginia has been made into a sacrifice zone affecting the entire state.

Wind energy provides a useful microcosm for understanding not just the grip that coal has on West Virginia jobs, or at least the discourse about jobs, but also in how value is reflected in the destruction and preservation of spaces. CRMW members and other activists had to respond to the devaluation of their own land when faced with the elevated value of other parts of the state. While both populations are *West Virginian*, the devaluation of central and southern West Virginia is clearly and directly the result of its coal seams and the industry's stronghold on the region. Not coincidently, it also resonates more with popular characterizations of the state.

Slowing Down the Process

MTR has never been just a local or state issue. It is in many ways a conduit between West Virginia and the rest of the country, even the rest of the world. Consequently, the federal government's responses to MTR have always been substantial

pieces of the larger puzzle and in turn, important to the socialization of class in the state. The CRMW had plenty of reasons to distrust state and federal governments. However, the presidential election of 2008 brought some relief at the federal level for antiMTR activists. Neither Democratic nominee Barack Obama nor Republican nominee John McCain supported MTR (Ward Jr., 2008). President Obama was not, however, an anticoal candidate or president. He received $241,870 from coal interests during the 2008 election cycle, about $60,000 less than his Republican counterpart (Burns, 2005). Still, Obama in some ways became the face of antiMTR politics in the state, particularly after winning the 2008 election. AntiMTR activists cautiously adopted an optimistic stand on Obama's election, while promining voices vilified Obama as an ignorant politician out to destroy the state and its people. For its part, the Obama administration halted the streamlined permitting process for burying streams – a key piece of logistics that allowed rapid and barely regulated MTR projects to start before they could be questioned – and halted existing permits for review. The review of 79 existing permits for compliance with the Clean Water Act sparked local outrage. The administration also reviewed many of the legal maneuvers of the Bush administration and made some key changes regarding the permit process. Ultimately, the original permits were not revoked, but as the Obama administration attempted to increase regulation, the coal industry and its supporters responded in ways that highlight the socialization of class in the state. They appealed to the need to mine and process coal at an accelerated rate as the primary need in the state, depending implicitly on the inherent good of progress and capitalism to frame the need for an expedited permit process. For example, National Mining Association president at the time, Hal Quinn, said the administration's "move to undo a

seven-year rulemaking process is precipitous and will only add to the uncertainty that is delaying mining operations and jeopardizing jobs" (cited in Ward Jr., 2009, p. 1A).

The federal government, in its attempt to oversee MTR and its environmental impacts, was labeled an outsider after Barack Obama took office in 2008. Part of Obama's platform in 2008 was environmental reform, and this allowed some to strongly link his victory to environmentalism, playing upon and reinforcing fears of outsiders. The *Charleston Daily Mail*'s editor contended, "West Virginia finds itself in danger from environmental zealots. Barack Obama was elected president in part because of support from those who would end the use of coal, including mountaintop removal mining" ("Our views; Voices of reason on mountaintop mining The EPA can't afford to ignore the warnings of W.Va. officials," 2009, p. 4A). When the Obama administration later rejected two MTR permits in March of 2009, this rejection was seen as an affront to West Virginia's economy. Again, *The Charleston Daily Mail*'s editor called the EPA's shift " radical", and associated Obama's politics with environmental extremism from outside the state:

> Most of the anti-coal activists who have the ear of the new administration do not live in the economies they would destroy or make the slightest effort to understand mining - or even road-building, for that matter - in mountainous areas. Some environmental zealots more [sic] about trees than they do about the people of West Virginia…. ("Our views; A monkey wrench for West Virginia? Obama's EPA also will be held responsible for its economic effects," 2009, p. 4A)

One Kentucky resident emphatically echoed the point in his editorial in the *Charleston Daily Mail*; "We cannot tolerate our stupid congress getting their noses into something they know nothing about." (Southgate, 2010, p. 4A)

Political oversight for environmental regulations was often dismissed or otherwise framed as unrealistic when set against the backdrop of jobs and livelihoods in the state of

West Virginia. *Charleston Daily Mail's* editorial section was riddled with concerns over Obama's EPA and how it reflected a profound misunderstanding of West Virginia and its residents. In 2009, in response to the EPA reviewing permits, the *Daily Mail's* editor decried:

> People who fly over mountaintop removal mine sites have no responsibilities to local people - indeed, seem to rank them lower than vegetation. They don't care about the consequences their policies would have. West Virginia leaders are better informed and more responsible, and sensible public policy will not be found without their input. ("Our views; Voices of reason on mountaintop mining The EPA can't afford to ignore the warnings of W.Va. officials," 2009, p. 4A)

In 2011, the editorial section responded to uncertainty created regarding EPA standards, stating, "the livelihoods of thousands of people, and the revenue upon which their communities depend, are to be at the mercy of regulators who, under the color of the Clean Water Act, can engage in environmental and economic whimsy" ("Our views; Economic murder by micromanagement; EPA could design environments that cannot support people," 2010, p. 4A). The federal government's attempt to tighten regulations and attend to the environmental impacts of MTR was demarcated in the same way *irresponsible* and *ignorant* environmentalists were, as careless and reckless outsiders. Any sort of delay or oversight was framed here as dangerous, and the ability for coal to be mined quickly was implicitly forwarded as the only way to protect the all-important coal mining jobs that maintain the industry's stronghold in the state's culture and identity.

Obama's curbing of the coal industry affected his popularity in the state, particularly in southern West Virginia where the state's coal culture is the strongest. In 2008, Obama gained 45% of the state's vote, ultimately losing the electoral votes to John McCain. Obama even won two southern counties – Boone and McDowell – in his first election ("President Map," 2008). However, in 2012 Obama secured only 35.5% of the

state's vote and lost southern, coal-rich counties decisively ("President Map," 2012). Obama became in many ways the face of insecurities in the mining industry, and his administration was framed as a group of meddling outsiders.

David's Victories

Underdog CRMW achieved a number of important victories over the years. Most notably, though MTR continues in the area, a new Marsh Fork Elementary school was built in 2011 (Jarrell, 2011). The school was completed and opened in 2012. Additionally, on May 11th of the same year, the CRMW celebrated the first day without MTR mining on Coal River Mountain in years. The organization's newsletter read:

> For the first time in years, no strip-mining is occurring on Coal River Mountain. On Friday, May 11th, Alpha Natural Resources announced it was immediately idling both the Beetree Surface Mine and the Twilight complex in the Coal River Valley, citing weak demand for coal. Perhaps coincidentally, CRMW and other WV groups filed lawsuits for selenium pollution against the Twilight mine and the Brushy Fork sludge impoundment next to the Beetree permit just two days before Alpha announced the idling. (Goodwin, 2012, p. 1)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, major financial backers of MTR have pulled their support for the practice (Bruggers, 2015). As public support for MTR and the coal industry's profit wanes, banks are beginning to see association with MTR as a general liability rather than a fruitful investment. This is especially encouraging given the virtually undeniable commitment to profit that such institutions maintain. The economic and public relations landscape may be such that MTR cannot rely on profit and progress much longer.

These victories and many more like them are encouraging; they are both modest and titanic. They are modest compared to the mining that is still done in the region and

the devastation it causes. The people in these isolated, rural hollows continue their fight because MTR still destroys the mountains and threatens to make the land uninhabitable. The victories are also titanic, because they would be unimaginable without the efforts of local activists and their ability to reshape the state and country's orientation to MTR, particularly when one considers the state's history with coal. The CRMW's fight with Massey Energy through the 2000s and early 2010s most clearly reflects the way class animates coal disputes in the region and the way activists have to work to reshape deeply engrained, multifaceted enactments of class that have been achieved and enforced over the past 150 years.

Conclusion: A History of Exploitation and Resistance

West Virginia's history with coal demonstrates the complexity and importance of the marriage between the two. It has been vital to the socialization of class as an achievement and how it affects populations today. As industrialization took hold of the state, the social, political, and geographic configurations in the area were altered irreversibly. Middle-class American ideals of progress were set against a region that was economically marginalized and materially disadvantaged. The process ran parallel to a number of popular and political discourses about poor, rural populations, effectively creating not only regional distinctions, but also class distinctions predicated on value, distinctions that are abundantly clear in more contemporary conflicts. The demarcation of Appalachia as a lower class is not exclusively a matter of discourses, but is present in the lived reality of being classed. Primarily this is seen through the establishment of southern West Virginia as a sacrifice zone, a region that is physically and culturally

destroyed for the benefit of the *broader good*, and is clearly manifest in the practices of companies such as Massey Energy and the key points of conflict covered here.

The socialization of class is animated by a series of economic, environmental, political, and cultural practices and distinctions in a way that reinforces class as a matter of way of life and in turn internal value. It is present in the dynamics of and is vital to the creation and maintenance of sacrifice zones, and is also sutured to the rhetorical climate of conflicts over such zones. The very idea that such areas and the people who live there should be treated better is a point of contention or is altogether dismissed or ignored. As rationales and worldviews are animated by lived experience and the distinction that was achieved over time became naturalized, both in the exploitation of rural populations in West Virginia and in the rhetorical landscape that such populations navigated. As such, activists not only face the challenges of fighting against specific corporate interests, but also a socialization of class that in some ways is sutured to the very language they speak. These dynamics have been in place since at least the 1890s, but MTR has obligated a transformation of the state of affairs in West Virginia and forced activists to transgress the socialization of class as part of their fight against the practice, or risk being destroyed in the wake of MTR.

CHAPTER 3

FIGHTING MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL IN A COAL CULTURE

Before the popularity of John Denver's song "Take Me Home Country Roads" inspired many West Virginians to informally adopt *Almost Heaven* as a kind of state motto, West Virginia was more commonly known as *The Mountain State.* However, neither of these flattering aliases has curbed the popular reception of West Virginia as *The Coal State*. This informal moniker highlights West Virginia's *coal culture* as fundamental to the very makeup of the state more broadly, a culture linked to the coal mining industry as a way of making sense of the world, employment, the environment, education, and so on. It is this culture and the way it ebbs and flows through the material makeup of the state, its politics, and the rhetorics of identity, resistance and control that underscore how coal and the politics of coal communities have come to dominate the culture and popular perception of a state with diverse populations.

West Virginia's coal culture supports and maintains the socialization of class as it has been achieved in West Virginia because of the industry's history in the state as the primary mover of industrialization and in turn the primary enforcer of industrial progress. This enforces class distinctions and stratification as more than just class-related themes and tropes, but as the very basis for articulating valuable rhetorical phenomena such as credibility and identity. It is simultaneously the result and supporter of coal's (perceived)

economic hegemony in West Virginia, the political power of coal in the state, and the importance of coal and its history to the rhetoric used in MTR conflicts. It relies on and enforces a particular orientation to the state's history, specifically with regard to coal's central place within it. To put it another way, this coal culture saturates the way meaning is made and negotiated in the area of coal country, particularly as that area comes to represent everything within state lines. It does so because rhetorics within that culture (as is the case with all cultures and contexts) distribute the elements of what constitutes political priorities (Greene, 1998) and in turn shed light on the link between consciousness and conditions (Greene, 2009). This process is deeply indebted to history – here the history of industrial progress in West Virginia – because history is constructed in a rhetorical register (Clark & McKerrow, 1998) and is used to serve particular, often dominant narratives (Farrell, 2008). Explications of history are rhetorical in that they shape ideologies, and consequently behaviors and discourses. West Virginia's coal culture relies on perceptual orientations, metaphors, articulations, and bases for credibility that have been cultivated by and through the coal industry over time. The state's coal culture enforces and relies upon the socialization of class, suturing distinctions in value to the rhetorics of identity, resistance and control.

West Virginia's relationship with coal was cultivated in a history that simultaneously indebted many West Virginians to political and economic dynamics that establish the state as a sacrifice zone. It also indebted these populations to the cultural practices and norms that the coal industry relied upon to implicitly stratify populations. As technological development expedites the mining process and coal companies continue to increase their bottom line, environmental degradation and unemployment wreak more

noticeable havoc. Consequently, the socialization of class becomes increasingly obvious as the various rifts discussed in Chapter 1 widen, as more and more land is destroyed, less and less is produced for the state and its people, and the devaluation of the working-class populations in West Virginia and elsewhere becomes more glaring. The key here is that the process of that devaluation is sutured to the very rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control that are negotiating contemporary conflicts over MTR, highlighting the strong ties between rhetoric and class in this context.

Since coal is so deeply indebted in the culture of the state, so socialized into day-to-day life and the way people make sense of the world, activists cannot completely abandon or reject this coal culture and the rhetorical appeals coming from it. Instead, they often seek implicitly and explicitly to transform it, little by little, engaging in deliberation as a contestation of terms that highlights difference and stratification (see Welsh, 2002) rather than an achievement of agreement. The need to examine such transformation in the form of the slippage of meaning and the decentering of key points of articulation is well documented (Biesecker, 1989, 1992; K. DeLuca, 1999b, 2011; K. DeLuca & Peeples, 2002; K. Phillips, 2002). Here the contestation over meaning and the potential slippages that come from it demonstrate how the socialization of class is achieved by fusing economic disparity to rhetorical appeals through the history of industrialization in the region and the broader emergence of global capitalism, highlighting the indispensable relationship between class and rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control as it has been discussed here. I examine how local activists break with a variety of connections that socialize class and in doing so take part in what Thomas Farrell (2008) calls *inventional history*. Inventional history strives to grapple

with history so as to understand how and why it has come to serve particular narratives or commitments, and also seeks to recover and emancipate alternative possibilities. CRMW and other activists, in their rhetorical attempts to transform a variety of commitments in the state, work to reclaim a different/alternative history of the state, and with it, a different/alternative culture. Decentering coal within the local culture is fundamentally a classed task, because it depends on appeals that are marginalized as part and parcel with the socialization of class outlined above. That is, they push against the grain and must transform key articulations and associations within West Virginia's coal culture in a way that challenges the rhetorical achievement and maintenance of class in the name of progress, and forward a different constellation of values.

The need for activists to disrupt certain social ties highlights the way class is maintained in the rhetorical terrain that one navigates. Therefore, this chapter sketches out the rhetorical dimensions of class, as it is both maintained and transgressed in two distinct stages. First, the rhetorical maintenance of West Virginia's coal culture is analyzed to demonstrate how it saturates rhetorical appeals used to justify MTR practices and in turn maintain the socialization of class. The examples discussed here represent key links in the rhetorical maintenance of the state's coal culture as it relates to the industry's history in the state and teleological commitment to progress. Specifically, this chapter analyzes how public relations campaigns, traditional gender roles, appeals to local distrust of outsiders, and the perceived centrality of coal to economic security in the state work together to create a coal culture that is indebted and committed to particular ideals of progress, relying on articulations of working-class Appalachian populations as less valuable. Such articulation vitalizes local forms of life and the rhetoric used to

navigate them.

The next section covers how CRMW and other activists' appeals attempt to transform this socialization. For CRMW and other activists to effectively combat MTR in the region, they must transform the binds that are part and parcel with the social stratification of class. Transformation takes a variety of interrelated forms, from the disruption and strategic appropriation of gender norms to the assertion of insider credibility, from the reclamation of West Virginia's identity and culture to the affirmation of new economic models and employment opportunities. Activists pushing against the centrality of coal are constantly negotiating their own identity and the identity of the coal industry as a way of challenging normalized associations that hold up the state's coal culture.

Coal Is King

Coal is king in West Virginia, even as the industry wanes in 2015 and into 2016. You cannot drive through the state without seeing "Friends of Coal" plastered on bumpers and billboards, or hearing about Obama's apocalyptic "war on coal" on talk radio. Polls indicate a general distaste for MTR (Rozsa & Howell, 2011) and in some cases an overwhelming opposition to the practice ("Survey findings on mountaintop removal strip mining," 2011). Even still, MTR holds fast in the state – at least to a certain extent – on the back of coal's omnipresence and centrality to the state's identity. The coal industry increasingly relies on rhetorical appeals to the state's *coal culture* or coal's importance to the state's very identity, working strategically to establish and maintain dependence in the state. This was particularly important during the economic

climate of the mid to late 2000s. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment in the state spiked in late 2010, hitting 8.8% in November of that year ("Local Area Unemployment Statistics," 2015). That same month, mining and logging combined made up 31,300 jobs ("State and area employment, hours and earnings," 2015), when the total labor force of the state was 811,839 ("Local Area Unemployment Statistics," 2015), meaning mining and logging together made up only about 4% of the workforce. As coal employment has dropped, West Virginians have become increasingly beholden to even less secure, lower income positions in the service industry. This dynamic makes livable wage jobs, such as those found in mining, increasingly appealing yet simultaneously increasingly rare, thereby highlighting the ideological importance of coal jobs, despite the industry's shrinking employment numbers.

"Grassroots" Movements

In response to the waxing and waning of public support for and economic viability of coal mining in West Virginia, a variety of "grassroots" organizations have emerged, dedicated to defending coal's place in the state. Beginning in the 1970s, corporations across America began using tactics once primarily the domain of public interest activists, including "grassroots" organizing and community coalition building, as a way of gaining political footing and forwarding corporate agendas (Beder, 2002). Coal companies and those with interests in the industry in West Virginia have used such tactics for some time, and many accelerated these efforts in the 2000s. One such group was Friends of America, a coalition of businesses in West Virginia, primarily with stakes in the coal industry. Massey Energy actively supported Friends of America. In fact,

Friends of America was perhaps most famous for its 2009 rally in Logan, West Virginia, designed to galvanize support for Massey Energy and mining interests more broadly. Conservative rock-n-roll icon and gun-rights celebrity Ted Nugent emceed the event. Don Blankenship, bearing a distinctive and gaudy American flag polo shirt, addressed the nearly 100,000 attendees about the dangers of Obama's abovementioned *war on coal*. Other conservative icons, such as Fox News' Sean Hannity, British public speaker on climate change "Lord" Christopher Moncton, and country musician Hank Williams Jr., joined the festivities, which amounted to a 12-hour music festival and conservative symposium on the economic and cultural importance of coal ("Friends of America Festival brings 100,000 to mountaintop mine site," n.d.). Events such as this reflect the not-so-subtle presence of the coal industry in the organization and funding of cultural events in the state, and they highlight how support for coal is articulated alongside other culturally relevant tropes, such as conservatism, country music, and patriotism.

The Federation for American Coal, Energy, and Security (FACES of Coal) also joined the fray in 2009, bringing together various businesses, organizations, and individuals from a variety of sectors. The group was specifically designed to encourage members to voice their opinions and mobilize their resources toward the protection of coal interests in West Virginia (Saxton, 2009). These goals demonstrate the need for the coal industry to actively maintain its presence and cultural centrality in the state through political and public discourse as well as far-reaching social and political networks that include individuals, business, and interest groups.

Though these and other organizations have done important work for the establishment and maintenance of the state's coal culture, Friends of Coal (FOC) has no

real equal in this regard. It is a true titan among procoal interest groups. Formed in 2002, FOC is perhaps the most important organization in the contemporary maintenance of coal's cultural grip on West Virginia. One of the group's goals is

> to inform and educate West Virginia citizens about the coal industry and its vital role in the state's future. Our goal is to provide a united voice for an industry that has been and remains a critical economic contributor to West Virginia. By working together, we can provide good jobs and benefits for future generations, which will keep our children and grandchildren close to home. ("Mission Statement," n.d.)

FOC is a self-proclaimed "grassroots organization" that works to promote coal's position in West Virginia's economy and culture. However, its "grassroots" status is suspect, as members of the West Virginia Coal Association – a trade association made up of a number of mine companies and representatives from related industries – provides its funding (Hohmann, 2005). Indeed, FOC never seems to want for funds and resources the way many antiMTR grassroots groups do. The group's omnipresence in the state, its logo's saturation of highways, and its TV commercials are stark in contrast to the presence of antiMTR groups who are more in line with common understandings of what *grassroots* organizations are in the state, operating on small budgets out of relatively modest facilities and dependent upon the hard work of local community members.

FOC emerged after legislative attempts were made to increase enforcement of weight limits on trucks transporting coal. Heavier trucks typically equate to more efficient mining as well as more road damage and more coal dust coating the properties of local residents. State Delegate Mike Caputo introduced a bill in 2002 that would increase enforcement in response to accidents involving trucks that exceeded the legal weight limit. These accidents involved trucks that weighed up to two times the legal limit, and in some cases they resulted in death (Bell & York, 2010). In the summer of

2002, the West Virginia Coal Association held a meeting to discuss public relations in the wake of this controversy. The result was the establishment of the FOC. Since that time, FOC has become a staple in West Virginia. It is not just an organization; it is a key point of identification, a way of affirming coal's centrality to West Virginia and its future.

FOC functions as an extension of the coal industry, a public relations machine that enforces and maintains key cultural links between coal and the state in the face of growing misgivings over coal's inherent good for West Virginia. As such, FOC often directly responds to the issue of MTR and answers the practice's critics. As early as 2006, Julian Martin of the West Virginia Highlands Conservancy speculated that FOC was created in direct response to waning public opinion on MTR in West Virginia.

> A few years ago, the coal bosses admitted that 80 percent of West Virginians oppose mountaintop removal. To counter their bad reputation, they rolled out a public relations blitz and created Friends of Coal, an instant "grassroots" organization. Their billboards and radio and television ads try to convince us that destroying half a million acres of West Virginia mountains and burying a thousand miles of streams is good for us. (Martin, 2006a, p. 5A)

The threat that antiMTR sentiment presents to the coal industry and how that animates FOC's tactics is clearly demonstrated in the group's attempt to promote the coal industry as an underdog susceptible to attack from *fear-mongering radicals*. FOC goes so far as to frame itself in response to attacks on West Virginia's coal culture, stating that citizens committed to the coal industry, to that point, lacked the strong organization needed to be a cohesive force in the state (Barry, 2012).

Sociologists Shannon Bell and Richard York analyzed the tactics of FOC to establish how the group functions to transform economic reliance into ideological dependency. According to Bell and York's (2010) research on FOC advertising, "the underlying strategy of the Friends of Coal is to attempt to counter the coal industry's loss

of citizen's employment loyalties by constructing an ideology of dependency and identity through a massive public relations campaign" (p. 128). As McGee might put it, ideologies such as this are constructed in a way that guides people "not directly to belief and behavior, but to a vocabulary of concepts that function as guides, warrants, reasons, or excuses for behavior and belief" (McGee, 1980, p. 6). These ideologies center on coal and impact rhetorical engagement in the state over coal (and often noncoal)-related issues.

Bell and York's study found that the FOC used two important strategies to establish and maintain ideological dependence: the appropriation of West Virginia cultural icons and pervasive social visibility. In each case, the organization establishes dependency and identification in a way that formulates warrants for maintaining coal's position in the state's culture and economy.

As Bell and York contend, FOC functions to establish and maintain an ideology in the state that supports dependency on and identification with coal. Considered in historical context, FOC has been key in the slow transition from a focus on economic dependence to cultural dependence. Such dependence relies on the identification and disidentification with culturally salient markers that are part and parcel with the socialization of class. FOC primarily associated themselves with traditional, working-class performances of masculinity, and then channeled those associations into appeals regarding the environment. The centrality of masculinity in the attainment and maintenance of economic security are extensions of what Rebecca Scott (2007) calls *dependent masculinity,* and they were key to creating and maintaining a dependent culture in West Virginia's coal country. Dependent masculinity taps into a way of

understanding work and labor that makes the male breadwinner central and emphasizes economic stability and wage earnings as a measure of family and individual value, extending that value into measures of morality. Consequently, figures that embody traditional performances of masculinity are used to maintain that centrality and play upon the male breadwinner figure, articulating it with regard to sports, outdoors pastimes, and the military as a way of perpetuating dependent masculinity as part of the state's coal culture. The organization tapped into the state's football culture, hiring two famous coaches from the state's largest universities. In 2006, FOC also hired Jeremy Starks (professional bass fisherman) and "Doc" Foglesong (retired Air Force general). All four men appeared in television commercials for the procoal group.

FOC strove to associate themselves with football as a way of tapping into the state's sports culture. Don Nehlen and Bobby Pruett were the two most successful football coaches at West Virginia University and Marshall University, respectively. Both men often spoke out in favor of the coal industry and to this day publicly support political candidates who claim to be supporters of the industry. FOC enhanced appeals to masculinity, particularly with regard to its association with football, when it sponsored the "Friends of Coal Bowl," a 7-game series between Marshall University and West Virginia University that lasted from 2007 to 2013. The series appealed to local fans, who maintained a relatively intense in-state rivalry between the schools despite the teams only playing once since 1923. FOC bought sponsorship of the game for less than the annual cost of two full scholarships per school (Martin, 2006a). The purchase allowed FOC to tack its name onto the game, use its logo in the stadium, and play commercials on the large jumbo televisions that accompany today's college football scoreboards, articulating

the group and its goals within the context of football and university/sports loyalties within the state. In not just associating itself with, but also sponsoring and claiming responsibility for the state's biggest and only real college football rivalry, FOC tapped into the rugged masculinity of both college football and the coal industry's image. It became part of the football conversation, repeated almost mindlessly as rabid football fans and pundits debated and discussed the game.

FOC associated itself with football icons and the cultural practice of attending football games as a way of enhancing its own credibility. Nehlen and Pruett stand in as faces of college football in the state, contributing their own brand of masculinity to the constant negotiation of the local coal industry. The Friends of Coal Bowl inserted an industry motto into the vocabulary of football in the state. To be a "fan" of college football in the region meant implicitly partaking in the repetition of "Friends of Coal" as it continued to saturate the discursive and visual landscape in the state. This is because the "grassroots organization" could function as a public relations extension of the coal industry and fit neatly into well-established narratives of coal's centrality to the state's identity.

Complementing the association of coal with masculinity through football, Starks helped establish the coal industry as an outdoorsman's industry. Starks acts as the environmental consciousness of West Virginia, discussing the environmental benefits of mining in the state, while aesthetically appealing to rugged masculinity (Bell & York, 2010). FOC was also one of Stark's main sponsors, meaning Starks often spoke out favorably for the coal industry in West Virginia, and Appalachia more broadly. For example, in 2009 he posted on a social media site that:

> When I talk to groups in West Virginia I tell them something that not everyone in my state gets. I tell them that the water around active and abandoned coal mines is almost always some of the cleanest, healthiest flowing water you'll find. And the fishing around mine sites is fantastic. (cited in Hargrove, 2009)

Starks' appeals rely on an environmental expertise based on experience with the land, expertise validated by his occupation as a professional fisherman. Starks is a native West Virginian, increasing the appeal of his experiential claims, claims that circumvent and outright ignore any scientific assessment of water quality and reflect the coal industry's reliance on articulations of credibility through particular notions of masculinity.

Similarly, Foglesong was used to appeal to the protector/provider image, simultaneously associating coal miners with the coal industry and with a masculine provider persona and the patriotic protector image of the military (Bell & York, 2010). Foglesong, as a well-known military veteran, helps forward support for the coal industry as a patriotic act, conflating abstractions of *hard work*, *patriotism*, and *masculinity*, and using them to articulate coal as part of West Virginia's (and America's) identity. Such conflations tap into the American Dream myth that glorifies *manual labor* and *hard work* as part of the very spirit of Americanism and one's patriotic duty. Corporations have long used this myth to encourage working-class populations not only to accept their work and their conditions, but also to actively defend their own exploitation as informal extensions of corporate public relations machines (Beder, 2001). The link connecting patriotism and the ideology of "hard work" with coal was evident in the abovementioned lulls in coal conflicts during WWI and WWII. Working for the unquestionable good of the country has been a staple of procoal discourses, and this is embodied in the choice of Foglesong as a representative of FOC.

FOC chose its associations wisely, linking itself, and in turn the coal industry, to

masculinity, popular pastimes/recreational activities, and figures that align with the way credibility is characterized in the region. In turn, they have been able to articulate what it means to support coal, and to frame the coal debate in ways that extend coal as central to not just the state's economy, but to its very identity and the values of and the way one conducts themselves as a proud West Virginian. This articulation comes from the same history and associations that required and created sacrifice populations in certain parts of West Virginia and allowed for the coal industry to gain power and sway in the state. These articulations of masculinity as they relate to credibility, the assertion of a lay interpretation of environmental health, and the conflations of hard work with patriotism resonate with the tactics used to control working-class populations in the area and appease them while the industry pursued technological advances and political strongholds to make their jobs obsolete. As a result, the very choice of these particular public relations moves, and their success for FOC, have signaled the way class is socialized into rhetorics of control and identity.

In addition to these key associations, FOC works consciously to saturate West Virginia with its name and logo, giving people an easy way to claim their identification with the industry and in turn these positively salient markers. This is accomplished in two primary ways: one, the production and distribution of their logo in the form of stickers and merchandise, and two, additional sponsorships. FOC makes a conscious effort to distribute their logo as widely as possible and encourages "members" to display the logo proudly. "Simply putting a Friends of Coal decal on the back of one's pick-up truck is a contribution to the organization's goal of painting the landscape with Friends of Coal logos, providing a strong visual image of solidarity and 'grassroots support' for the

coal industry" (Bell & York, 2010, p. 135). FOC doesn't merely make associations that are readily legible in context; they provide people an active way to demonstrate their own identification with the coal industry and perpetuate its cultural importance in the state. This taps into the grassroots tactic of coalition building, but does so with the expanded resources of the coal industry.

The FOC also uses its resources to maintain an ideology of dependence through sponsorships, attaching its name to a variety of cultural touchstones and events, including high school sporting events, coal symposiums, racing events and drivers, and auto fairs. This sort of sponsorship implicitly indicates that these events are impossible without coal's presence in the state and maintains its association with the state's culture. Whereas corporations such as Massey Energy often pump millions of dollars into improving their own corporate image, FOC functions to improve an *industry image*. Coal itself is the ideological touchstone, the point of identification. This allows FOC to focus on the cultural dynamics of coal and reframe or outright ignore the economic or environmental dimensions. Individual companies benefit from the improved image of the industry as a whole, because the maintenance of a rhetorical climate that implicitly relies on coal's positive associations distributes value in ways that resonate with the creation and maintenance of sacrifice zones.

"Grassroots" groups such as FOC highlight the cultural capital the industry holds in West Virginia and how the state's coal culture works to articulate the industry in relation to a variety of other cultural values, such as masculinity and patriotism. These tactics rhetorically maintain and lean on the socialization of lower class populations and sacrifice zones in West Virginia, because they draw upon social, political, and cultural

links formed during the industrialization of the state and the subsequent devaluation of many of its populations, demonstrating the classed dimensions of rhetorics of identity and control.

Maintaining "Traditional" Gender Roles

The active maintenance of coal culture in West Virginia has both implicitly and explicitly extended into the maintenance of gender norms over time. Procoal women's groups further bring into focus the role that gender plays in the maintenance of West Virginia's image as a coal culture. They promote the interwovenness of cultural identity in coal communities and the coal industry itself, supporting the dependent masculinity discussed above. In turn, they often promote and extend traditional gender dynamics that have been vital to the coal industry in the state. Of course, these gender dynamics were not invented in West Virginia; they exist in a variety of forms across space and time. However, they do provide a key link between coal's importance in the industrialization of West Virginia lands and the achievement of class stratification in the region, and they demonstrate another way that rhetoric and class are linked.

ProMTR groups and communities reflect and often rely on an implicit commitment to this kind of masculinity and the gender roles it animates. Consequently, they perpetuate a particular construction of moral citizenship that is measured as economic success within a narrow spectrum of occupational choices. That is, a somewhat antiquated model of value, based on a single individual's capacity to gain and maintain industrial, high-risk work, remains at the core of gender divisions that MTR supporters lean on for the rhetorical maintenance of West Virginia's coal culture (Scott,

2007). The value distinctions that overlay dependent masculinity are deeply rooted in commitments to progress in America, commitments that vitalize the region with a sense of pride for fulfilling the country's insatiable need for energy, the same commitments that have molded parts of central and southern West Virginia into sacrifice zones. These constructions of masculinity were born from the divisions of labor and gender roles used in coal camps. The family in the coal camp was dependent on the male's work in the mines and each family member contributed to the overall production of that labor. In most cases, women and children were responsible for domestic and community upkeep, while men earned the family's wage. Procoal women's groups perform community upkeep and engage in educational projects, lending their rhetorical power to the maintenance of mining's image in the state for the sake of their husbands' – or the general male miner's – economic stability. Here, the cultivation of a dependent population has moved from material to ideological. No longer are women needed to maintain livable conditions in coal camps, but gendered performances help maintain the efficacy of coal culture itself.

The Friends of Coal Ladies Auxiliary (FOCLA), for example, was created in 2007 to "enhance the image of coal and combat some of the adverse publicity coal receives on a daily basis in the press and from many organized environmental groups" (cited in Barry, 2012, p. 31). Though the group started and remains headquartered in Beckley, West Virginia, it now claims to be a national organization whose members strive "to become active participants in charity, supporting troops in Iraq with donations of food and supplies and supporting local conservation projects" ("About Us," 2015, para. 3). Much like FOC, the FOCLA is a self-proclaimed unbiased organization with no financial

or professional obligations to the coal industry. However, according to Joyce Barry (2012), "members are primarily middle class white women whose husbands have ties to the coal industry" (p. 31). Many FOCLA members, including its chairwoman Regina Fairchild, are married to people with direct or indirect business ties to coal companies.

FOCLA has also been exceptionally active in West Virginia's education system. The group started "Coal in the Classroom" in 2009, designed specifically for third- and fourth-grade students ("Coal in the classroom," 2015). What started as a local six-week course for students in one Beckley, West Virginia private school expanded into public schools within a year. The program allows FOCLA to promote field trips, visit classrooms, and create promotional and educational videos. In communities with often limited educational resources, "Coal in the Classroom" provides much needed relief, effectively associating – once again – coal with the attainment of political, social, and cultural resources in the state and improving the industry's image. This gives FOCLA the chance to promote the importance of coal to both local communities and the nation's best interests at a very young age, normalizing the idea that coal is a vital and healthy part of the state's economy and culture.

Massey Energy had its own, more openly political, women's organization. Don Blankenship created the Massey Energy "Spousal Group" in the late 1980s. The group, made up mostly of Massey miners' wives, was strategically designed to promote a positive public image for Massey. Blankenship gave this group millions of dollars over the years and effectively viewed them as a PR wing of the company (Barry, 2012). Much like FOCLA, The Spousal Group engaged the community in a variety of ways. The group donated time and money to local and national charities, helped fund and build

recreational facilities, and promoted breast cancer awareness, serving to perpetuate a positive public image for Massey as crucial to the maintenance of a healthy, functioning local community.

FOCLA and Massey's Spousal Group more often than not focus their attention on *traditionally feminine* community tasks such as education, community upkeep, and charity work. As a result, they perpetuate dependent masculinity by performatively embracing these roles, thereby supporting the coal industry itself, standing in for the male miner figure. Gender performance is vital to understanding the way bodies are coded, given meaning, and organized in the world, but also how that meaning exerts force on individual choices. Gender performance refers to the way gendered bodies are expected to act and the rhetorical consequences thereof. The gendered body is trained through experience and cultural context in ways that enforce certain relations and expectations. To break with those expectations, to perform differently, highlights inequity and the implicit maintenance of norms that enforce and maintain gender stratification (Butler, 2011). This is because gender ideals such as masculinity and femininity are not only linked to the biological body, but are also read through performances that a variety of bodies can carry out, demonstrating how masculinity comes to represent the link between manliness and power in the West (Halberstam, 1998). Therefore, gender performances carry a great deal of meaning beyond the broad expectations associated with how men and women are supposed to act; they highlight points of value and stratification and in turn points of transgression.

Normative gender performance in coal communities and much of West Virginia, at least when it directly engages the coal industry's place in the state, enforces both

gender dynamics and class dynamics, because they function to maintain the male as the economic torchbearer, and this becomes a self-evident claim for the importance of coal in the state. The primacy of mining jobs when voiced from explicitly female groups contributes to the socialization of class by linking the industrialization practice of creating and maintaining coal camps, a practice used to establish sacrifice zones, to contemporary rhetorics of identity and control. Women in procoal groups can easily perform as community caretakers and educators in the name of an ideal – implicitly male – miner as central to a moral work life and dynamic.

Subversion of such performance can draw criticism. Women who protest MTR and mining more generally are often dismissed as radical or uncouth (Barry, 2012). In one well-documented example, the president of Eastover Mining Company, when commenting on coal strikes in Kentucky, said of women involved in strikes, "There's been some conduct that I don't like to think that our American women have to revert to" (Kopple, 1976). The statement serves as a microcosm for how transgression can be read vs. the performance of women as community caretakers. Even though women are highly active in the fight against MTR (as will be discussed below), the formation of groups such as FOCLA and Massey's Spousal Group highlight the way gender dynamics have been crucial in the continued construction and maintenance of West Virginia's coal culture, and how that is performitively manifest in procoal rhetorics. Once again, rhetorics of identity and control in the region regarding coal are grounded in the achievement of class over time in the name of industrial progress.

Who's In and Who's Out?

One of the most important distinctions in rural communities generally, and in West Virginia's coal fields specifically, is the distinction between *insider* and *outsider*. The Appalachian region has a rich history of isolation, cultivating what bell hooks (2012) describes as a wild independence and a resistance to norms imposed from outside the region. This distinction and the suspicion of those who are not "from here" are sutured to the popular demarcation and marginalization of Appalachian people. While the insider/outsider dynamic is present across contexts, used to demarcate credibility, it is particularly important in Appalachia broadly and in West Virginia specifically. This distinction's importance rests in its importance to the creation of Appalachia as a culturally distinct region. Appalachia has been framed, particularly in the 1960s, as an area of paranoia and deeply rooted suspicion of outsiders, leading in some cases to violence (for example, see Trillin, 1969, 1984). The distrust, however, is far from a myth; it is real and holds sway today. Judy Bonds explains this distrust:

> In 1860, this army officer addressed the general assembly in Virginia and said, "To the west of here" – that being West Virginia – "lies a land with vaster amounts of coal than all of England, nay, in all of Europe. And the people there don't know the value of their land. So let's go steal their land and put them to work as cheap laborers." And our fate was sealed. (cited in House & Howard, 2009, p. 144)

The most telling part of this quote is that interviewers/editors of the volume it is found in could not confirm the accuracy of the claim itself. Its accuracy is of far less consequence here than what it reflects about suspicion of outsiders and the value of local identity. Bonds speaks to the distrust cultivated in the economic exploitation and popular dehumanization of Appalachian populations (particularly West Virginians), a distrust that resonates widely in the state and commonly serves as suitable evidence of credibility or

lack thereof. Consequently, the insider/outsider distinction is loaded in a variety of ways that work to maintain and protect the state's coal culture.

What constitutes "inside" and "outside" is often somewhat fluid. At times, state lines serve as suitable demarcations. Other times, outsiders are seen as anyone not from a mining community. Still other times, the Appalachian region as a whole constitutes the *inside*. Regardless, the aversion to outside *interference* has come hand in hand with the expansion of absentee mine ownership in West Virginia. The vast majority of energy companies that mine coal in West Virginia are centered outside of the state in places like Missouri and Virginia, funneling massive profits out of the state. Still, in 2010, at a press conference to urge the EPA not to revoke MTR permits in the state following federal tightening of permit requirements in the Obama administration, state legislator Ron Strollings (D-Boone County), expressed how deeply coal had become embedded as an insider concern: "We're always a little nervous in coal country when outside forces don't allow us to do what we like to do, which is work and mine coal" (cited in Rivard, 2010, p. 1A). Strollings highlights the way outsiders are often broadly framed as meddling and ignorant of local desires, while insiders are often grouped as people who like coal mining. This distinction is one that antiMTR voices must constantly fight. Despite the fact that the mining industry is made up of geographic *outsiders*, it is framed as an insider industry, and in turn, supporting coal is how some locals even articulate the definition of being an insider.

Consequently, labels of *insider* and *outsider* come to represent objects of knowledge. Objects of knowledge are created when cultures are totalized or fixed within the conceptual orientation of other groups. Colonized people, for example, have suffered

this sort of objectification through the cultural and political practices of colonizers as well as the varied ways colonized populations have been mediated (see Said, 1979, 1983). The "country" or rural as well as city populations have become their own types of objects of knowledge in Western literature. According to Raymond Williams (1973):

> The division and opposition of city and country, industry and agriculture, in their modern forms, are critical culminations of the division and specialization of labour which, though it did not begin with capitalism, was developed under it to an extraordinary and transforming degree. Other forms of the same fundamental division are the separation between mental and manual labor… The symptoms of this division can be found at every point in what is not our common life: in the idea and practices of social classes, in conventional definitions of work and of education; in the physical distribution of settlements; and in the temporal organization of the day, the week, the year, the lifetime. (pp. 304-305)

That is, Williams is commenting on the way populations are divided and come to be understood, thanks, in large part, to capitalism and the distribution of labor required by it. These populations take on a variety of attributes that are cultivated in the advance of capitalism. Consequently, divisions of labor and experiences thereof are important to the formation and political dynamics of objects of knowledge in the wake of industrialization.

Such objects can function to create others. In the case of the insider/outsider dynamic in MTR discourses, the creation of outsiders as others is central to maintaining the state's coal culture and a sacrifice population that will defend it, because outsiders are defined as much by their willingness to adhere to the discourses and associations of coal culture as they are their geographic location, distributing credibility according to one's willingness to discursively maintain coal as a cultural focal point in the area. Donna Haraway (1988) contends that the body becomes an object of knowledge precisely insofar as it is a boundary, a social marker that is produced and negotiated in interaction,

but fluid and abstract, never fully realized in the body. Thus, the *outsider* is a troublesome other that is being constantly negotiated. Within the state's coal culture and the discourses that maintain it, the outsider is often conflated with the environmentalist or anyone who may stand in the way of the unbridled movements of the coal industry. Reclaiming the identity of the insider is vital to fighting against MTR and pushing against the influence of the state's coal culture, making the negotiation of those terms central to conflicts over MTR.

As objects of knowledge, the designations of insider and outsider are important to the demarcation of class in Appalachia, particularly the maintenance of working- and lower class populations that defend their own exploitation and the destruction of their land. While the mining itself is done in the state and many of the employees remain West Virginians, most of the economic and cultural benefits of mining go outside of the state. Thus, the insider/outsider distinction betrays the politics linking coal to the identity of many in West Virginia and the state itself. West Virginians, particularly those in coal communities, identify with the coal industry and defend it as a matter of identity, despite bearing all of the industry's burdens and reaping only a relative fraction of its rewards. It is identification with an industry that grounds rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control, while diverting attention away from the fact that the coal industry does economic, cultural, and environmental violence to the state itself in the name of industrial progress.

While it is true that the average coal miner's pay in West Virginia is significantly more than can be earned with the same education level in other occupations, those wages still pale in comparison to the profits coal executives make. In 2010, the average starting

wage for a coal miner out of high school was $60,000 (Dwyer, 2010). However, that same year Blankenship's pay *fell* 43% to a *mere* $9 million in total compensation for the year (Huber, 2011). Additionally, mining consistently makes up less than 5% of the workforce in West Virginia on a yearly basis. Despite this, those who wish to challenge mining practices are being labeled as outsiders. The state's population disproportionately bears the cultural and environmental burdens of mining and increasingly sees the economic benefits gathering outside the state's borders. The salience of the insider favoring coal within the state's coal culture reflects how the area's devaluation, its emergence as a sacrifice zone, is sutured to rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control with regard to mining in the state.

As MTR conflict peaked in the latter part of the 2000s, the unenviable label of outsider became a powerful pejorative used to dismiss and delegitimize one's opponents. FACES of Coal's Bryan Brown proclaimed in 2010, "Forces from outside our state and region seek to eliminate or severely diminish the use of coal as an energy source, without, apparently, any appreciation for the benefits that mining provides our state and nation" (Saxton, 2009, para. 5). This sort of appeal attempts to galvanize local support against a cultural other, one that not only doesn't understand West Virginia, but whose actions are reckless and harmful to the state and its people. Don Blankenship, who maintained a degree of credibility for himself in the state by reminding people of his West Virginia upbringing (despite residing in Kentucky for tax purposes), put it this way in 2009 when responding to activists climbing mining equipment in protest of MTR:

> When protesters perform dangerous acts such as scaling the boom of a piece of equipment to gain media attention, they not only put themselves at risk, but also put our miners and state troopers in danger…. Every West Virginian should be outraged that these people come from outside our state to shut down mines that

are legally permitted to operate. (cited in Ward Jr., 2009, para. 11)

Blankenship draws upon the distinction between meddling outsiders and knowledgeable insiders to villainize the protestors. They weren't just protestors halting mine operations, they were ignorant people from somewhere else who put two culturally important figures (miners and law enforcement officers) in needless danger. He then expands the juxtaposition more explicitly, stating that any and all West Virginians, despite their political commitments, should be outraged at these outsiders attempting to shut down mining operations. The insider/outsider distinction is being played upon heavily here. Those who are insiders are "West Virginians" but they are also those who respect the lives of miners and law enforcement officers. They are those who respect the law and who understand that mining is dangerous work. Outsiders aren't just from out of state; they are people who would want to shut down mines and who are dangerously ignorant of the ways of coal mining.

The "outsider" is also blamed for harming West Virginia families as coal-related unemployment and hardship is associated with outsider decisions. In a 2011 article in the *Charleston Gazette*, staff writer Paul Nyden cites the Dial family; a legal decision on mining permits put James Dial (the *breadwinner*), who did reclamation work, out of a job. The family, according to the article, blamed "outsiders who don't understand what it means to live and work as a coal miner" (Nyden, 2011, p. 1C). In another case, Bill Maloney, a consultant on drilling in Morgantown, West Virginia, criticized officials who claimed to be from coalfield communities, stating, "the only result of their policies is the destruction of *our* people's ability to support *their* families" (Knezevich, 2011, p. 1A, emphasis mine). Maloney implies that anyone from coal country could not and would

not challenge a miner's ability to make a living. Both quotes show how the conflation of those who oppose MTR or the coal industry's destruction of the land more generally with "outsiders" is used to demonize anyone who challenges the coal industry, framing their challenge as a challenge to the working-class ways of life rather than a challenge to a practice with devastating consequences. Additionally, the shift to horizontal conflicts is present as environmentalists and community activists are rhetorically positioned against working-class families and fellow community members rather than the coal industry itself.

In this same vein, environmentalists are often called outsiders or accused of having no real investment in the state's people. For example, the *Charleston Gazette* cited Joyce Gunnoe of Dry Creek, West Virginia, calling supporters of alternative energy options meddling outsiders and stating that locals who joined them were retired and didn't need the industry anymore ("Coal vs. wind: Energy fight rages in W.Va.," 2008). Don Blankenship also made a habit of conflating the two when speaking about challenges from environmentalists (Shnayerson, 2008). The term outsider became a way of negotiating environmental concerns as disconnected from the concerns of West Virginians, implicitly supporting the centrality of coal to the economy and culture of West Virginia, and circumventing attention to long-term economic and environmental concerns. This provided easy metaphors for dismissing anyone who opposed mining projects, particularly if their reason for opposition was in any way, shape, or form possibly related to environmental concerns. Once again, the negotiation and articulation of this object of knowledge, that is the outsider, rhetorically relies upon and perpetuates the centrality of coal to the very cultural fiber of the state. This trope of *outsider* applies

broadly and demonstrates the rhetorical importance of the insider/outsider dynamic to maintaining the coal industry's legitimacy in the state and with it the economic impacts of treating southern West Virginia as a sacrifice zone.

A Monopoly on Livelihood

The suspicion of outsiders, often framed as a matter of their inability to understand the plight of Appalachian people or West Virginians more specifically, transitions into more explicit appeals to coal's centrality to West Virginia's economy and its monopoly over the state's future. Talk radio host Hoppy Kercheval captured the local eye roll that often accompanies environmental idealism in an editorial in the Charleston Daily Mail:

> Environmentalists are understandably thrilled with their cohorts at the EPA. Bruce Nilles of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal Campaign hopes that the EPA's decision on Spruce would mark the beginning of the end of mountaintop removal mining.
> "Let's put residents to work restoring the land and waters damaged by coal mining over the past decades. And, let's overcome the naysayers who oppose Appalachia sharing in the jobs and economic development that comes with building a clean, renewable energy future underway across the country," wrote Nilles dreamily. Yes, of course, and unicorns will soon be prancing in the meadows amid solar panels and windmills. (Kercheval, 2010)

Kercheval echoes the belief that coal is the only way to make a decent living in coal country, while mocking the idealist pipedreams of outsiders. Coal is positioned as the only game in town, despite the abovementioned statistics about the coal industry increasingly abandoning miners. The concern over coal mining jobs is constant in MTR discourse and is another way the rhetoric of contemporary conflicts is deeply indebted to the socialization of class through industrial progress.

The focus on coal jobs is often strongly associated with the perception that without

West Virginia coal, America will suffer. In 2007, when the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition attempted to curtail mining in Logan County, the coalition's members were called self-righteous idiots and outsiders (Fortune, 2007). Rocco Savilla (2007), a resident of Nitro, West Virginia, called the group "extremists" and contended that, "West Virginia and Logan County need the jobs and taxes from this mine, and America needs the coal they produce" (p. 4A). One resident of Amherstdale, West Virginia echoed the same sentiments:

> West Virginia and Logan County needs these jobs to keep our families going. Where will we be if we don't get our permits? We will be sitting in the dark without TVs, washers and dryers or cook stoves. There will be no need to have local pizza places or Wendy's to go to, because everyone will suffer from the domino effect this will have on everything from the largest companies to the smallest. (Compton, 2007, p. 4A)

Here, mining's value simultaneously hinges on the jobs it provides to the local community as well as the value West Virginia mining provides for the nation. This taps into a history of appeals for coal mining, including those used to halt mining conflicts during times of war. Coal is indeed essential to the nation's energy needs, and those needs were summoned to villainize workers who would fight the coal industry during a national crisis. Today, those needs are summoned more casually to villainize anyone who challenges contemporary mining practices more generally.

Mining's importance to the state and its economy are also conflated to appeal to concerns over national security and the country's wellbeing. In 2007, after a U.S. District Court judge ruled for stricter permit regulations to start MTR projects, lawyers for the State Department of Commerce and Environmental Protection filed with the 4th U.S. District Court of Appeals. The Bush Administration and Massey Energy actively supported the appeal, which claimed:

> As a result of this case and the others which have preceded it, those who desire to obtain environmental permits in West Virginia have been forced to meet greater requirements than for the same federally based regulatory programs in any other state… The difficulties responsible mine operators are having in obtaining permits to mine West Virginia coal, due to litigation, [are] becoming a threat to the state's ability to continue to provide the nation with a stable source of energy and contribute to national security. (cited in Ward Jr., 2007, p. 1A)

West Virginia's coal mining jobs are framed as vital not only to the everyday conveniences Americans take for granted, but also to the very security of the country. This taps into every citizen's patriotic duty as well as the glorification of mining work as a noble and patriotic pursuit, evading attention to initiatives to cut mining employment, the conditions miners are working in, or the (lack of) job security miners enjoy. Such appeals to the nation's well-being and security depend upon the narrative of industrial progress and the implicit requirement that some populations are sacrificed for that progress. It requires focus on abstractions such as national security and the requirement to avoid or defend against physical violence from outside threats, and equally requires a focus away from the violence being done to people in West Virginia's coal country.

These arguments for the coal industry and the argumentative ground it stands on all appeal to ideals and practices essential to industrial West Virginia and the cultivation of the state as a sacrifice zone. Those ideals and practices strategically articulated the area as less valuable, and licensed a variety of economic, political, and cultural hardships in the name of the state's coal culture. The groups and rhetorical tactics that depend upon and promote West Virginia's coal culture are not just enforcing an industry; they enforce class demarcation and stratification as it is built into rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control. This is the function of the socialization of class: to make the demarcation of value appear natural within the very links and networks that animate credibility, identity,

and legibility across time and space. The establishment and maintenance of West Virginia's coal culture – as outlined here in the creation of groups, the organization of events, and the arguments used by those who support MTR and the coal industry more broadly – relies heavily on the environmental and cultural rifts that are inherent in industrial capitalism. It reflects the internalization of such rifts and class's saturation of the forms of life and rhetorical climate of West Virginia, and in turn other sacrifice zones. The division and stratification of working-class populations in coal country was achieved over time through political and cultural practices that framed these populations as less valuable, and in turn made them feel that value in a variety of forms. To the extent that rhetorical appeals are rooted in and draw from those practices, rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control are indebted to the socialization of class.

Reclaiming West Virginia

Clearly, much of the fight over MTR in West Virginia has boiled down not to the various pros and cons of scraping the tops of mountains in order to mine the coal inside, but to a conflict over culture, key terms, credibility, and identity. Activists in the region have had to fight against the state's coal culture, rhetorically reconfiguring the social relationships that enforce it and, in turn, maintaining the socialization of class. This section discusses a variety of interrelated ways that CRMW and other activists have consciously or unconsciously fought against the state's coal culture and, as a result, the socialization of class in Appalachia. Activists and other antiMTR voices must not merely rely on appeals against the practice of MTR itself, but must rupture patterns of socialization and attempt to articulate different configurations of Appalachia broadly, and

West Virginia specifically.

Women Who Fight Back

One of the most striking aspects to local grassroots activism against MTR in West Virginia is the role women play in leading the charge. As is the case in much of the environmental health and environmental justice movements, women are highly active and highly visible in the fight against MTR, harnessing a variety of skills and engaging their traditional gender roles in strategic ways. According to Joyce M. Barry (2012), who has positioned CRMW and other MTR groups within the history of environmental justice (EJ) in the United States,

> Women in West Virginia, like many women in EJ groups throughout the world, transform work associated with the private sphere into public, community-based activism. In doing so, they show the importance of women's influence in both the public and private sectors of society. (p. 11)

Women in these contexts tap into traditional and historical socializations of women, while challenging the norms that centralize men and moralize coal employment.

Despite the deeply entrenched gender roles in much of Appalachia, these women are tapping into a rich history of women's protest in the region. In the 1970s, women were highly active in strikes against strip mining efforts and decreased employment in Eastern Kentucky, where women faced the same marginalizing discourses regarding their "proper" roles, outlined above (Maggard, 1987). This is the lineage most suitably associated with contemporary grassroots advocates today, because in both cases, activists face similar struggles. They must recognize the environmental dimensions of mining, but do so with an eye on jobs and employment concerns. This throws the historical function of industrial progress into relief, centering the masculine male breadwinner rhetorically in

a way that maintains dependent masculinity and continues to frame women with regard to support roles, in turn applying specific expectations and challenges to their rhetorics of dissent. Though female activists have been active in the region for years, they are still subject to the expectations cultivated during the transformation of West Virginia, particularly its coalfields, into sacrifice zones. Focusing on how women strategically tap into their traditional gender roles and break from them demonstrates the importance of negotiating gender and its above-outlined relationship to the socialization of class to rhetorics of resistance.

Women in environmental movements have often purported to call on their skills learned in more traditional gender roles when organizing and partaking in environmental activism. Women who have become leaders in environmental activism have explicitly done so because of skills developed in domestic maintenance and childcare roles (Gottlieb, 1993; Krausse, 1998). These women deploy the localized salience of their gender roles to speak to environmental concerns, asserting themselves as concerned mothers, grandmothers, and caregivers (Kaalund, 2004). *Feminine rhetoric* style has been important to environmental coalition building, as well as education (Dow & Tonn, 1993; Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). This has been common in the environmental movement. For example, Rachel Carson, scientist and author of the influential book *Silent Spring* (1962), practiced environmental activism that was simultaneously embraced, as part of a nurturing femininity that aligned with certain gender expectations, and rejected, because her femininity did not align easily with the scientific sophistication of her arguments, creating dissonance in certain contexts where gender norms were particularly salient.

Judy Bonds was well conscious of the gendered dimension of her activism in West Virginia. Barry (2012) engages the tensions in gendered performance in unpacking a quote from her interview with Bonds. In it, Bonds indicates that for women fighting against MTR, the focus is on protection, maternal instincts, and the proverbial *mother hen* syndrome. Barry rightfully points out that this sort of articulation of resistance might be jarring to some feminists, but it challenges the distinction between public and private concerns that have been key in silencing women. In another interview, Bonds directly addresses this distinction between public and private spheres, which remains strongly associated with dependent masculinity:

> Women have always been at the forefront of Appalachian fights. Traditionally, women have held down violence. I think women like to talk. Women can speak out. Women are protective for their children. Go ahead and fight for a mommy-bear's cub, or go for that hen's chicks. Yeah, go for it, buddy. Women are protective. (cited in House & Howard, 2009, p. 148)

Here, Bonds makes clear women's activism against the backdrop of traditional gender roles, but does so through metaphors that imply confrontation and summon images of violence. She shifts from framing women as nonviolent, and even antiviolence, to metaphors that use violence to frame the role of women in the environmental movement. The caregiver persona is given claws and teeth, justifying the shift of the traditionally private sphere of maternity and caretaking into a more overt and public concern. This appropriates the traditional male association with violence (see De Lauretis, 1985) and combines this transgressive femininity with images of motherhood. The identity of the nurturing mother can be empowering for environmental activists (Dow & Tonn, 1993) and conceptualizing this image as a militant figure against industrial pollution can expand the tools used to combat environmental degradation while transgressing gender norms

(Peeples & DeLuca, 2006). That is, the mother identity provides a compelling conduit for women to simultaneously adopt traditional gender roles that align with their experiences, and to also transgress those gender roles strategically, a process that undercuts to socialization of class in this context.

When considered against the backdrop of Bonds' work more broadly, such contentions also work to rearticulate how protection might manifest itself. Bonds is outspoken and known widely for standing up to the intimidation of promining forces, performatively rejecting the passive female supporter persona, as well as the centrality of dependent masculinity. Bond's use of terms like "coal whores" (Shnayerson, 2008) certainly does not align with traditional gender stereotypes. As women engage these binds, strategically utilizing and breaking with particular associations, they performatively play off and work against the gender expectations cultivated under dependent masculinity and the ideological commitments they are so strongly associated with. Such a willingness to embrace metaphors and performances of confrontation or violence highlight that simple adherence to traditional caretaker roles cannot suffice. They work to appropriate those roles and use them to confront normative gender performances and create new rhetorical grounds to speak against the coal industry.

Judy Bonds is not the only woman whose anger manifests itself in ways that might come off as *unladylike* or *uncouth* to those with a vested interest in dependent masculinity. Fellow Goldman Environmental Prize winner Maria Gunnoe struggles with her compassion and the anger she feels, "I try not to hate, I really do. There's a part of me that feels sorry for them. There's a part of me that would be standing with my foot on their throat and I wouldn't feel sorry for them" (cited in Caskey, 2006, para. 2). Here,

Gunnoe acknowledges that she is conflicted about the fantasy of violence, but openly acknowledges it in a way that aligns more with the claw-bearing feminity Bonds asserts, rather than the domestic support roles necessary to the configurations of dependent masculinity. The imagery of stepping on the throat of those who threaten her way of life, in its own way, forwards a somewhat transgressive articulation of gender within the state's coal culture. The use of violent metaphors here previews the importance of violence to the negotiation of the state's coal culture and the varied issues of identity therein. Violence and violent metaphors provide women one way of breaking from the configurations of the state's coal culture, because violence has been used to articulate key phenomena such as masculinity and the dependence of mining communities.

Not all breaks with traditional gender roles involve metaphors of violence. Activist Marilyn Mullens taps into her own narrative history about what it means to be Appalachian when she identifies why women lead the fight against MTR:

> Appalachian women have always held a strength beyond measure. My grandmother was born and raised in West Virginia and she never backed down from a fight and I know she would be mad as hell about what is going on here. So part of what I do I do in her memory and I hear her saying, "you stand up for what is right no matter what because at night time you have to be able to lay your head down and sleep." I feel like there is so much corruption in this state in all aspects of our government and law enforcement and the root of all of it is the money that the coal industry keeps putting in their pockets. It will come out sooner or later though. We will see to it. (cited in Biggers, 2012)

Mullens uses a specific history to justify her need to fight MTR, a history that makes such a fight a moral imperative. Forwarding this history allows her to ground her identity and her argument about what it means to be a woman fighting MTR in something other than the configurations of the coal culture discussed above. Procoal groups, who can instead make appeals to jobs that are understood within the broader coal culture, do not

need this sort of explicit appeal to the histories, narratives, and rationales. Once again, examining this rift – this slippage in how someone is framing and forwarding Appalachian women – highlights the importance of finding rhetorical footing outside of the history of industrial capitalism and its relationship to the coal culture.

The importance of women to the fight against MTR is not coincidental. It is part and parcel with the socialization of class in West Virginia, and Appalachia more broadly. This socialization reaches into the forms of life that train individuals and communities regarding gender roles and gender performances. The massive and unrelenting destruction of the lands and cultures in West Virginia threaten communities and homes. This collapse between what might have traditionally been held as distinctly public and private realms – among myriad other reasons – underscores the importance of women in MTR conflicts. It also highlights how gender roles and gender performances are key to achieving and maintaining the socialization of class in West Virginia's coal country. Gender norms were key to creating dependent populations and remain rhetorically important to rhetorics of identity and control that seek to maintain coal's centrality through the ideal male breadwinner. Such appeals must be argued against, but must also be undermined, as women forward their own voice through traditionally male tropes, such as violence, and through the forwarding of narratives that privilege a different ideal of Appalachian women, not as dependent, but as independent actors in the fight against MTR.

Bardic Christianity and Environmental Stewardship

One of the biggest challenges to speaking against the coal industry is maintaining credibility within the local context while speaking against an industry that so deeply associates support of coal with being an insider, and in turn conflates being an *environmentalist* with being an *outsider*. Christianity provides one way of establishing credibility and rearticulating the conflict so as to not adhere to the dominance of coal. Religion, specifically Christianity, has long been an important part of West Virginia identity and the forms of life used to make sense of the world. According to the Pew Research Center, 78% of West Virginians identify as Christian ("West Virginia: Religious Composition of West Virginia," n.d.). Christianity and its discourses are present on billboards, radio stations, television ads, and local gatherings. It is a taken-for-granted part of local public discourse. Christianity even has a rich history in the state as part of mining disputes. Miners, mine operators, environmentalists, unions, and virtually any other group with a stake in the state's mining industry have long used religion and religious institutions to gain favor with local populations. Consequently, religion provides one way for antiMTR activists to combat the key links between coal supporters and *insiders,* as well as between environmentalists and *outsiders*.

The tensions between religion and credibility in the context of central and southern West Virginia are not simple matters of asserting faith and gaining credibility, but are negotiated through what Thomas Lessl (1989) calls the bardic and priestly voices. The bardic and priestly voices are used to demarcate communication that relies on internal authority, knowledge of cultural tropes and values (bardic) from communication that relies on external authority, an elite substratum of knowledge that represents what the audience

cannot deeply, but only superficially, comprehend (priestly). Lessl uses these voices as metaphors for distinguishing types of communication, but does not limit the manifestations to religious spheres. Scientific knowledge, for example, is often manifested as a priestly voice. Here, these categories parse out how credibility can be established and brought into question. It also functions with regard to how religion is conceptualized as a public domain, or as a technical domain with public impacts. Lessl provides a compelling framework with which to analyze the breaking of key links in the socialization of class through notions of credibility, as Christianity's relationship to credibility is sutured to both internal and external authority. In conflicts regarding MTR in West Virginia, the ability to speak on behalf of God or to align with expectations about God's will is not limited to those who hold a priestly position. Rather, a folk or bardic approach is often implicitly privileged. That is, those who are able to tap into and deploy the religio-cultural symbols and vocabularies (see Geertz, 1973) that shape knowledge and attitudes often do so from a place of experience, using that experience and resulting knowledge to challenge the authority of others and create space for their own voices.

While organized churches are vital to the negotiation of religion and environmentalism in West Virginia, and in some cases are quite active against MTR, they face their own challenges that limit the rhetorical efficacy of institutions and provide room for bardic voices. Many religious groups are organized to protest and speak out against MTR, like Christians for the Mountain and 27 others who signed a 2010 petition to the EPA regarding concerns over MTR (May, 2010). Still, activists like Judy Bonds remained critical of churches for not getting involved (or involved enough) on the side of antiMTR groups. For example, Bonds contends "More churches don't fight back because they have

coal miners in their congregations. And there's a history there. Most of the pastors in the old churches were owned by the companies. Churches don't want to divide their congregations" (cited in House & Howard, 2009, p. 137). Bonds highlights the distrust of institutions and forwards a rationale for why other churches do not join the fight against MTR, undermining the credibility of those who remain silent by questioning their motives. Bonds links those motives to politics rather than religion, keeping the rhetorical space wide open to condemn MTR on spiritual grounds. Bonds also aims her critique at individuals who come to represent that logic behind religious support of MTR, because of their claim to priestly positions. Bonds recalls hearing a preacher speak at a local buffer-zone hearing:

> He works on the mountaintop removal site. He said he'd been to the Grand Canyon and while he was there he thought, "Why look at that. That's one of the Seven Wonders of the World." And he said he thought about how, back home, he was creating that, too. I thought, "you think you can create. That you can do a better job than God?" I thought: "Buddy, you better think about what you're saying." Mountaintop Removal is morally wrong. (cited in House and Howard, p. 149).

The priestly position of authority here is questioned as Bonds implicitly asserts her own religio-cultural knowledge. This reflects the emphasis on an everyday understanding of God, wielding appropriate symbols and vocabularies such as *an infallible God* and *God the creator* as a way of delegitimizing the preacher and his support for MTR. In turn, she is able to transition into the contention that MTR is immoral based on her own bardic religious authority.

Credibility is often asserted through religious belief more directly. It is stated as a matter of fact, a self-evident claim to local concerns and values. This assertion of credibility is, more often than not, articulated against the backdrop of place and the establishment of one as an insider. This further demonstrates the salience of religion,

specifically Christianity, in the region as a way of making sense of the world and articulating identity. For example, one letter to the editor in the *Charleston Daily Mail* chastising MTR as a moral injustice starts, "I was born in Logan, baptized in the Presbyterian church there and attended picnics at Chief Logan State Park for many years" (Blakeman, 2007, p. 4A). The letter's author simultaneously asserts both their own religious and local credibility by establishing a sense of place and faith before moving into their argument. In a more subtle case, the CRMW newsletter introduced new staff members in the winter of 2011. Debbie Jarrell was one of those members, and she explained her motivation for joining the group when she talked about her family's roots in the region, roots that go back to the 1700s:

> I hold the same values they held deep in my soul, that if we take care of the earth it will take care of you. It would only be a natural fit that I do all in my power to see that my grandchildren and their families are able to enjoy what the good Lord put on earth. (D. Jarrell, 2011, p. 3)

Jarrell deploys common religio-cultural vocabularies such as *soul* and *the good Lord,* tropes that are used alongside her family heritage, her sense of place, and her desire to pass along the local culture to her children. In both cases, people speaking against MTR use not just their birthplace or where they were raised as a way of framing themselves and their concerns as an insider. They also carefully forward their own faith and identification with Christianity to further support their case as insiders and make their case for speaking on local issues and speaking against MTR.

The internal source of credibility that is tapped into through bardic Christian discourses allows activists to reframe environmentalism as a key local concern, forwarding links between environmentalism and Christianity while combatting the association between *environmentalist* and *outsider*. Bonds, for example, cites her own

reading of Genesis 2:15 as a way of articulating environmentalism as a religious concern:

> God said he put man in the garden to dress it and keep it. Not to destroy. He told us to use what was on the earth, but he also told us to protect it, to be stewards. We can use it, but we can't abuse it. Look at nature. Creation shows God's creativity. He gave me something in my charge to take care of. I have to answer to him for it. Which one of these mountains would God blow up? (cited in House & Howard, 2009, p. 148)

The concept of stewardship is important in the link between Christianity and the environment, especially when framing Christianity as an environmental issue, a way of tapping into existing religious commitments, vocabularies, and ideals to forward an environmental agenda. Once again, this is used here as a way of forwarding links between and negotiating key terms such as *insider,* in a way that does not align with the material and cultural history of industrial progress in the state, and therefore works to pick away at the socialization of class in the region, providing different configurations of value.

In another example, Robert Kennedy Jr., who is a strong antiMTR advocate, also tapped into Christian vocabularies and tropes as a way of inserting his voice into the conversation, "It was God who made these mountains, and it's Don Blankenship who's cutting them down" (cited in Gavin, 2009, p. 3A). Kennedy's use of such language is particularly important here because Kennedy was often dismissed as an outsider (see Gavin, 2009), demonstrating how tapping into Christian vocabularies and relying on the bardic sense of credibility that come with it can be used in an attempt to fight the outsider distinction, as a way of delegitimizing speakers.

In some cases, the delineation between good and evil is expressed through the destruction of things that God created, identifying sacred sites and framing environmental concerns through more traditional Christian language. MTR was referred to as a godless scheme (Bradford, 2008) and against God's will (cited in Hamill, 2010) as ways of

asserting it as an evil practice. Additionally, there are numerous examples of mountains framed as God's creation (Webb, 2009) and part of God's *beautiful earth* ("Reader's voice," 2009), asserting them as inherent goods that should be protected. In another example, a woman from Barboursville, West Virginia wrote in her letter to the editor, "As a person of faith, I believe that mountaintop removal's rapid destruction of streams, forests, and communities must be stopped. It is both an affront to God and an unjust process, exploiting economically vulnerable people" (Blakeman, 2007). These examples parse out how the links between the environment and Christian antiMTR activists forward work to combat the conflation of *environmentalist* and *outsider* by framing MTR as a moral issue.

Such frames of good and evil forward the value of sacrifice zones and populations, and in turn implicitly challenge the inherit good of MTR and industrial progress. Perhaps no one put the case as clearly as novelist Denise Giardina:

> I will be as blunt as I can be. Mountaintop removal is evil, and those who support it are supporting evil. The mountains of West Virginia are God's greatest gift to West Virginia. To destroy the mountains is to spit in the face of God Almighty. Our state motto and state song are about the mountains. Our state university's football team is named after the mountains. Blowing apart these beautiful mountains is an attack upon this state and this people. (Giardina, 2007, p. 5A)

Here, Giardina directly establishes the link between the destruction of mountains and evil. Mountains are privileged as a gift from God and West Virginia's most valuable cultural resource. In forwarding these articulations of key terms, Giardina uses Christian vocabularies and tropes to challenge the notion that anyone who rejects the coal industry is an outsider, rhetorically decentering coal and creating links that give value to lands and people that have been treated as disposable. Consequently, these are somewhat sophisticated critiques of the socialization of class in the region as it has been achieved over time.

These critiques also invite challenges to political and economic imperatives that drive proMTR discourses and decisions. Allen Johnson of Christians for the Mountains forwards this position. I quote Johnson at length here to demonstrate how this articulation of the responsibilities of religion challenge economic progress:

> The massive scale of beheading coal-bearing mountains, obliterating headwater streams and building multibillion-gallon toxic slurry impoundments beg biblical and theological activity.
> It is now clear the coal industry and their regulatory and political sidekicks care only about the dollar. An honest debate on the ethics and morality of mountaintop removal has not occurred. Like wolves slobbering their chops over a field of lambs, the coal industry and their lapdogs in government now look upon coal-to-liquid technology as a new source of meat to feast their jaws. "Coal will bring prosperity to the state," they trumpet, yet after more than a century of economic and political domination by the coal industry, West Virginia has one of the highest poverty rates in the country, especially in the southern coalfields. So much for prosperity.
> OK, churches, let's have it. Is "it right by God" to permanently destroy the mountains, valleys, forests, streams, rich diversity of animals and plants, and local culture to provide a few jobs, a tidy corporate profit and a cheap light bill?
> We think not. "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains" is from the 24th Psalm that launched Christians for the Mountains two years ago at a gathering in Charleston. Simply put, this answered for us a decisive question: "Is nature our property to do with as we like? Or do we as humans have responsibility that corresponds to our privilege of living and gaining our sustenance within God's creation?" (Johnson, 2007, p. 1C)

Here, Johnson establishes the explicit link between environmentalism and religion in some detail, as well as the implications thereof. First, he asserts environmentalism as a religious concern, while maintaining the Christian telos of appealing to and satisfying God. Then, he juxtaposes the demands of economic progress (cheap electricity, job development) with the demands of Christianity (environmental stewardship). Later in the article, Johnson goes on to add that the issue of job development is important, but he also questions whether those are jobs that a church can endorse (Johnson, 2007), implying that economic concerns must take a back seat to the moral imperatives of Christianity. Johnson

effectively uses religio-cultural vocabularies and the commitments that undergird them as a way of decentering coal in a variety of ways here, centering a Christian morality as a way of challenging the coal culture, its hold on political decision making, and the way it animates discourses about MTR.

Christianity's influence and prominence in West Virginia provides activists with a way of decentering coal. Christianity allows those who want to speak against the coal industry to articulate their credibility and their insider status with regard to religious commitments. Equally important, it allows them to frame environmentalism differently, combatting the jobs vs. environment dichotomy and the negative stereotypes environmentalism is often associated with. In challenging the links that maintain and prop up the state's coal culture, antiMTR activists who tap into these discourses rhetorically challenge the socialization of class. They forward a different configuration of values that does not depend primarily on the inherent good of industrial progress, but instead forms new links to negotiate and articulate key terms and ideals in the region. Christian vocabularies and tropes challenge socialization of lower and working-class populations in the region, undermining the way class is built into the rhetorics of identity and control that maintain the centrality of industrial and cultural progress forwarded in the coal culture.

Embracing the "Hillbilly"

Cultural progress and the caricature of the Appalachian *hillbilly* are not often associated with one another in popular discourses. Even still, this cultural icon and the stereotypes associated with it are reclaimed by activists as a way of undermining the socialization of class through the cultural devaluation of Appalachian populations. As

discussed in previous chapters, the term itself has long been a pejorative for rural Whites, particularly in Appalachia. Pejoratives such as "hillbilly" ebbed and flowed in American popular culture, coinciding with economic downturns and subsequent media attention to impoverished rural areas, discussed in Chapter 2. The term and the image associated with it thrived in the 1930s and 1960s, and was actually both a cultural marker and a key to making sense of the economic downturn in the country, questioning the unbridled legitimacy of *progress* in the name of modernity in the United States (Harkins, 2004). The term *hillbilly*, even when taken up as a critique of modernity, was always used as a counter to the ideals of progress. Activists who reclaim the term are tapping into that history and forwarding the antithetical link between *hillbillies* and progress as a positive, proudly claiming the moniker and continuing to challenge the morality of industrial progress as it is manifest in practices like MTR.

As a caricature disassociated from ideals of progress, civility, and prosperity, the rural Appalachian *hillbilly* was and is one touchstone used to delegitimize and silence rural communities and – to a degree – license social, political, and economic inequity. For example, a North Carolina mayor once described the working-class mountaineers in his constituency as such:

> The majority of these people would rather have 'rasslin' and hillbilly singin'… These mountain people are different. You get up here in these mountains and you'll find people that are different than anywhere you'll find in the world. They don't believe in law and order. (cited in Billings, 2000, p. 4)

The idea of dismissing Appalachian populations along these lines is generally considered aboveboard, because it is a reflection of something essentially bad in the people rather than a cultural misappropriation. That is, the differences between Appalachians and the rest of the country are more often than not framed as a matter of inherent value and moral

character. According to a *New York Times Magazine* article on redneck jokes in the early to mid1990s, the impulse to make fun of hillbilly culture targets those who, "are supposed be bad-reactionary and racist – and thus deserving of all they get" (cited in Billings, 2000, pp. 4–5).

Reclaiming pejoratives such as this one is a common and effective tactic used by marginalized groups to undermine rhetoric's control. Reclamation of terms such as "queer" have been pivotal for both activists and scholars grappling with the dynamics of oppression of and resistance from LGBTQUI* populations, as well as other marginalized populations that have adopted *queer* as a more general subversive identity (McConnell-Ginet, 2002; Rand, 2014). Reclamation of pejoratives differentiate insider use from outsider uses of those reclaimed terms, using the term to galvanize oppressed populations around positive articulations of identity, while countering oppressive constructions of identity and demarcating insiders and outsiders by way of their experience, as it is reflected in their use of the term itself (Beaton & Washington, 2015). That is, reclaiming pejorative terms used in oppressive discourses allows marginalized groups not only to sap the oppressive power of a term, but also to help cultivate positive identities rooted in shared experiences. This defines – and in this case *redefines* – insider/outsider groups from the standpoint of the oppressed, and works to positively articulate marginalized identities.

Like many other marginalized groups before them, activists in southern West Virginia and rural Appalachia more broadly, including members of CRMW, embrace the terms that are most commonly associated with their devaluation (Munn, 2011). Barry (2012) claims that in using and embracing the term hillbilly, "West Virginia activists are

asserting a racial and classed identity situated in the mountainous environment of Appalachia that distinguishes them from urban and suburban white, middle-class society" (pp.108-109). They recognize that it stands to represent their social degradation and attempt to reclaim and transform the identity associated with it. For example, Bonds discusses the omnipresence of the label and her pride in it:

> It's all over the place. *Squidbillies*, "Appalachian ER," "Hillbilly Moment." It's all over the place. I call myself that because I'm proud to be an Appalachian and proud to be an American. *I'm proud to be a hillbilly. I love that word*. That word doesn't bother me at all. It's the words they put in front of "hillbilly" that demean us. I want Americans to understand that we're a distinct culture that they should be proud of, too. Our place defines us. We're a distinct mountain culture and our culture means something. (cited in House & Howard, 2009, pp. 143–144, emphasis mine)

Bonds echoes the sentiments of a number of activists in the region, taking pride in being called a hillbilly and in her identification with the term, a cultural marker. She associates the term with a sense of place, a distinct mountain culture that has meaning and value. Fleshing out these links, Bonds works not only to claim the term, but to reframe it as a cultural term, one that has value outside of the configurations of industrial progress that more often than not connect it to devaluation and use it to implicitly link the culture to a lack of intelligence and morality.

In many ways, embracing this term functions to rearticulate environmentalism and what an environmentalist looks like. For example, Maria Gunnoe attempts to forward *hillbilly* as something positive and political, claiming, "Hillbillies are the last people you can make fun of — it's acceptable. We do have educations. We do have lives. There's going to be an uprising here; the coal industry has turned us into activists" (cited in Caskey, 2006, para. 2). Here, Gunnoe identifies as a hillbilly, in one breath recognizing its use as a mocking term and in another asserting the humanity and politics

of the hillbilly population.

CRMW took this link between hillbilly and activism a step further. The group helped organize and took part in what they called the "Thousand Hillbilly March", a march in Washington, D.C. to protest MTR. They also printed shirts that read "Save the Endangered Hillbilly." They identified the term hillbilly with the local culture, a culture that the group contends is in danger if MTR practices are allowed to continue in the region. The shirt again reclaims the idea that antiMTR causes are an insider concern. It assumes identification with the term, but positions hillbillies as victims of environmental devastation. Thus, reclaiming hillbilly serves as another way to combat conflations between environmentalist and outsider.

Part of the reason that reclamation of the term hillbilly has become such a vital tactic for activists is that rejection of "hillbilly culture" and characteristics associated with it could easily be misconstrued as cultural arrogance. CRMW members and other activists repeatedly and explicitly affirm their insider status as a way of privileging local knowledge, and ultimately rearticulating West Virginia culture. For example, CRMW's Patty Sebok asserts her family's long ties to the state by explaining, "I'm not an outsider. My family has been in the Coal River Valley for over 10 generations, and I'm the wife of a disabled, underground, union coal miner" (Sebok, 2007, p. 4A). The organization's website also stresses that they pride themselves on *local* knowledge and are concerned with *local* issues. Activists such as Maria Gunnoe take this commitment to location as an opportunity to distance herself and other activists from the brand of environmentalism that has a negative connotation in the region: "We are connected to the environment around our home lands. We care about our culture. But that does not make us tree

huggers." (cited in Nyden, 2009, p. A8). Within the context of these types of assertions of local knowledge, reclamation of the term "hillbilly" allows activists to position themselves as both environmentalists *and* insiders, linking the key term to insider as well as local knowledge and concerns.

CRMW's reclamation of the hillbilly is supported and framed within its larger reclamation of what it means to be West Virginian, to be an insider, and to be part of the mountain culture in the region. One way they do this is to flip the insider/outsider dynamic on the coal industry, drawing attention to the stakes of allowing West Virginia's coal culture to rhetorically group environmental concerns with outsider interests. The group calls out the coal industry not just for maintaining such nefarious conflations, but for being the real outsiders with no investment in mountain communities. According to the *Coal River Mountain Watch Messenger*, the group's newsletter, "a landholding corporation that has no stake in the community and no reason not to pursue the most profitable short-term use of its land (mountaintop removal), especially since the costs of that development are borne by residents of the valley" (Kunkel, 2011, p. 6). Bonds characteristically brings the issue into her signature focus, discussing how absentee coal companies strategically pit West Virginians against one another, while they are the true outsiders:

> Coal mining is in my family's blood, and we have been in southern West Virginia for 10 generations. We are not the outsiders; the coal companies are the outsiders. The coal industry and their puppet politicians have made it easier for the workers to attack their own neighbors in West Virginia rather than to stand up to "King Coal." They would rather poison and bomb their own people for 30 pieces of silver (Bonds, 2007, p. 6A)

In both of these examples, the coal industry is framed as an outsider interest that has created false dichotomies between insider groups. The shift to horizontal conflict that is

so crucial to the maintenance of coal's centrality in the state's political discourse and ethos is called out as part of the refocusing of what it means to be an environmentalist and what it means to be an insider, a West Virginian.

CRMW takes great care to discuss and forward traditional Appalachian practices, further legitimizing themselves as an insider organization. In the *Coal River Mountain Watch Messenger*, the group makes a concerted effort to remember and extend Appalachian traditions as a way of promoting a cultural heritage outside the coal industry. These efforts are most notable in the newsletter's "Remembering the Past, Working for the Future" features. This section is dedicated to preserving traditional Appalachian cultural practices:

> An important part of Coal River Mountain Watch's mission is to rebuild sustainable communities. We believe in honoring our rich heritage of connection to the land and sense of community, to guide us as we work together for a truly healthy future. In each issue, the Coal River Mountain Watch Messenger will piece together memories, stories, and dreams for the future of our mountain home. (Rick Bradford, 2009, p. 12)

The feature included practices such as hunting ginseng ("Remembering the past, working for the future: The seasonal Round: Digging ginseng," 2009) and "Molly Moochers" (wild mushrooms) ("Remembering the past, working for the future: The seasonal Round: Hunting molly moochers," 2010), canning food ("Remembering the past, working for the future: The seasonal Round: Summer canning," 2009), and hog butchering ("Remembering the past, working for the future: The seasonal Round: Hog-Butchering Time," 2011). It has also featured geographic and social landmarks, such as Kelly Knob and Whitesville's (where CRMW headquarters rests) and the People's Store, as part of the rich history of southern West Virginia (Rick Bradford, 2009; C. L. Jarrell, 2009). This reflects CRMW's acute attention to making and drawing upon connections that

undermine the centrality of coal to the state's identity.

CRMW and other activists in the Appalachian region, particularly coal country, tap into these practices as a way of chipping away at coal's cultural and economic stranglehold on the region. These attempts to reclaim an alternative history of West Virginia culture and identity combat the socialization of West Virginia as a sacrifice zone only good for mining, and they fight the notion that environmentalists are outsiders. They do so by forwarding alternative configurations of value. Activists involved in MTR debates must take steps to decenter coal from the state's cultural and economic landscape, because coal's centrality is vital to maintenance of the state's coal culture and the socialization of class that it enforces. These steps have been at least somewhat successful, as demonstrated by the slowing of MTR and declining support for the practice as discussed in Chapter 1.

Economic Alternatives

Finally, antiMTR voices have worked diligently to dislodge the idea that coal is the only way to find gainful employment in the state and meet the state's energy needs. They must do so to break with both the material and cultural hold coal has over the state's economic security and future. CRMW has been committed and continues to dedicate a great deal of time to exploring and presenting potential alternatives for producing energy and creating jobs in the region. Some options include traditional farming and foraging practices, logging, and wind energy. In each case, these practices/industries are explicitly and implicitly forwarded as alternatives to the state's dependence on coal as the key provider of jobs, a dependence that is sutured to how

deeply ingrained coal has become to the state politically, economically, and culturally. Each provides unique advantages and disadvantages. Each also reflects the complex socialization of class as it relates to the rhetorical potency of jobs, as they relate to coal's importance to the state.

Ginseng is perhaps the most modest, yet surprising alternative presented. Many, including CRMW, see ginseng as being indicative of the renewable resources West Virginia's mountains hold. The root has long been foraged in West Virginia's mountains, particularly in the central and southern regions. Ginseng sells for approximately $300 a pound. In the early 2000s, more than $2 million worth of ginseng was extracted from the state each year ("Ginseng," n.d.). Of course, this does not begin to mitigate the economic impact of coal, even in the decline of the industry, but it represents for many the economic potentials of the mountains themselves and their renewable resources. As mentioned above, CRMW has dedicated sections of their newsletter to discussing the cultural and economic value of ginseng. This highlights the group's attempt to find value in the mountains, particularly renewable resources, rather than resource extraction that outpaces the land's ability to metabolize. It implicitly highlights the rifts created by the coal industry.

Timber is a much more compelling and economically viable renewable resource in southern West Virginia and central Appalachia more broadly. In the early 2000s, according to the West Virginia Forestry Association, the timber industry grew despite general manufacturing declines, boasting sustainable economic growth and local circulation of economic profits (Milauskas, n.d.). Timber prices in West Virginia were also rising in the early to mid-2000s due to population increases and land demands,

increasing the economic viability of timber harvesting in the state (Murriner, 2002).

MTR opponents often champion the renewable timber on West Virginia's mountains. According to Julian Martin, "Just one example of our future economic loss is in the hardwoods industry. Every year, we lose 1 million board feet of timber that would have grown on the mountains already destroyed. This could build 4,000 houses annually forever" (Martin, 2006b, p. 4A). Here, Martin forwards the economic viability of the lumber industry and the unseen economic costs of MTR in West Virginia. Stressing the costs of MTR to West Virginia challenges the assumption that coal mining is good for the state's economy, a claim often made by mining interest groups. Forwarding lumber as not merely a viable and renewable economic opportunity, but also one that MTR destroys, challenges the economic benefit of MTR and frames the value of the land differently. Again, antiMTR voices are creating new links between the land and key rhetorical tropes in the region, so as to negotiate the value of that land outside of the connections and frames of the state's coal culture where coal is the primary way of earning a living and using the land.

Wind energy, discussed in some length in Chapter 2, presents perhaps the most compelling economic and energy alternative in the state. Wind energy projects have been proposed on a number of occasions. Rory McIlmoil of CRMW wrote an editorial in 2008 addressing the advantages of proposed wind farms:

> First of all, the [2008] proposal was put forth not by environmentalists, but by members of the communities surrounding Coal River Mountain. The basis for the proposal and support thereof is that, for once, there is an economically viable alternative to a proposed mountaintop removal operation that could and should be developed, especially given the dangerous and destructive nature of expansive strip-mining. Economically, the proposed wind farm would provide permanent local jobs and sustainable energy production, forever, while having zero impact on the surrounding communities. It would provide a stable source of tax revenue

> for Raleigh County that could be invested in economic development projects . . . forever. (McIlmoil, 2008, p. 4A)

McIlmoil establishes that the proposal is not the pet project of outsiders or environmentalists, but is a job-creating, economically viable alternative to coal. He – as many other activists do – distances himself from the trope of the environmentalists and actually juxtaposes it with community members, establishing his credibility as an insider. He then speaks to the issue of jobs extensively, asserting wind energy as good for jobs, tax revenue, and energy production. The coal industry uses all of these tropes to secure itself as central to the state's culture, and in turn dictates the terms of conflicts over coal, terms that McIlmoil challenges.

Presenting economic alternatives is a prerequisite for any sustained long-term picture of a West Virginia free of the coal industry. However, the appeal to sustainability has not been enough. The narrative of coal's central places in the state holds high ground in West Virginia, because it has been so securely associated with jobs in the state. Rhetorical appeals to alternative energy sources must be made against the backdrop of the state's economic dependence on coal and the social identification with coal mining work. Consequently, these presentations – as has been discussed here – work to create links that are alternative to the ones that have been so fundamental to the socialization of class in the region. Disrupting West Virginia's dependence on coal, its monopoly over the state's economy, and its culture requires not just the proposal of new economic opportunities, but the decentering of the industry, the rhetorical landscape it vitalizes, and the teleological ideals of progress it maintains. CRMW activists and others concerned with MTR practices actively transgress gender norms, strategically establish credibility, reclaim cultural touchstones, and rearticulate West Virginia culture. Each reflects the

way class is socialized across various spheres and suffuses the rhetoric of MTR conflicts.

Conclusion: It Is Hard to Dethrone a King

More than 100 years of economic, resource, and labor exploitation has established West Virginia as a coal culture. This culture provides the rhetorical setting for the MTR debates in question. The creation and maintenance of a dependent culture (here, a coal culture) is built upon key links that articulate coal as a sort of center in the culture, and in turn heavily influences the construction of rhetorical appeals and what constitutes credibility. Such a culture ensures that industry failure (or even setback) is linked to individual economic and moral loss, deterring challenges to the coal industry and its reliance on sacrifice zones. Consequently, class is socialized in the region in a way that becomes obvious in the rhetorics of identity and control that coal advocates use. Such rhetorics draw from the political and cultural practices that the coal industry relied on to create a sacrifice zone in the region, the very practices and vocabularies that articulate the region as less valuable, and license manifestations of that value (or lack thereof). As a result, activists must decenter coal and transform the rhetorical terrain of the debate so as to not rely on appeals to the state's coal culture. They aren't merely arguing against coal; they are doing so in a way that undermines key links in the coal culture that maintain the ideals of industrial progress, and forward different constellations of value and identity that challenge the socialization of class. The relative success of antiMTR groups and advocates over the last six years is a sign that these tactics, at least to some degree, are working.

The process of decentering particular notions of progress is a difficult one.

Reflecting upon such disruptions as related to class provides three advantages here. First, it highlights the way class saturates a variety of spheres. Class – as has been forwarded across disciplines – is about value and the varied ways that value saturates material and symbolic life. The development of a coal culture is intertwined with economic, cultural, and political dynamics that impact the day-to-day lives of people in coal communities. To understand conflicts over practices such as MTR, careful attention must be paid to the achievement of class as a demarcation and stratification of value, particularly as that value is manifest in rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control. The process itself in West Virginia, as I expect is the case elsewhere, relies on the complex interplay of cultural, political, and economic forces. That specific history animates contemporary rhetorical climates and reflects the rhetorical dimensions of class and the politics of progress.

The decentering of coal culture also demonstrates that class and rhetoric are inseparable. Class (as well as race, gender, and other markers of identity) is central to the construction of cultural ideals that remain fundamental to the cultural imagination of America. Those ideals have been crafted and molded over generations against the backdrop of certain populations. This is not to dismiss the economic disparities that have real, tangible, and often terrifying manifestations. In fact, those disparities are part of the process of socializing class with regard to progress. The ideal of industrial progress requires devalued populations that are dependent on industries such as coal. In the case of West Virginia, the entire state has in some ways been culturally conflated with devaluation of coal communities, a process that affects communities, their identities, and their ability to speak against the industries, practices, and ideals that assume their lack of

value.

Finally, activists fighting against MTR reflect the challenges of working against dominant narratives of history, particularly the history of coal as the center of West Virginia culture. Scholars such as Michel Foucault (1971, 1972, 1990) and Hayden White (1990) have frequently reminded readers that such linear understandings of history can be dangerous and oppressive. In the case of West Virginia, the narrative of economic progress and the importance of industrial production have been central, implicitly enforcing the need for a working class whose identity is bound tightly to its own exploitation. The dominant narrative supporting West Virginia's coal culture, of coal as the backbone of the state's economy and culture, serves as a mediator between the constantly enforced and maintained ideals of progress challenged here and the socialization of class in the form of the many material inequities, devaluation, and (de)moralizing discourses inflicted upon rural Appalachia.

CHAPTER 4

THE RHETORIC OF VIOLENCE AND THE MORALIZATION OF CLASS

While the socialization of class over time weighs heavily on rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control in contemporary conflicts, it also normalizes and even moralizes class stratification. Some of the associations made with working- and lower class populations articulate them into the broader cultural imagination by way of phenomena that are set against the very core of the ideal of progress, especially as it relates to deliberative democracy. What's more, these associations aren't made arbitrarily, but are in many cases – like the one discussed here, violence – actively encouraged and culturally manipulated in certain regions. The presence of violence in West Virginia's past and in contemporary conflicts over MTR combined with the oversimplification of violence as it relates to rhetoric, democracy, and progress (outlined in Chapter 1) work to socialize the devaluation of certain populations as an internal matter of value. This is because working- and lower class populations suffer the politics of violence as it relates to progress disproportionately. In this chapter, I explore the complex relationship between rhetoric and violence in these contemporary conflicts, in light of the theorization of violence as ideologically important to the construction of politically salient ideals of progress in the contemporary world. This analysis demonstrates the hazards of narrow

readings of violence and explores how touchstones in rhetorical theory are in many ways indebted to the ideals of progress being challenged here.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the forwarding of Appalachia as the antithesis of America's progressive project is well established in Appalachian Studies literature. It is foundational to the field itself. For example, in the collected volume *Back talk from Appalachia: Confronting stereotypes* (Billings, Norman, & Ledford, 2000) – an introduction to Appalachian Studies at the turn of the 21st century – leading authors in the field set out to explore how Appalachian stereotypes have been waged against the region's people to secure it as a culturally devalued place with devalued people. The introductory collection confronts the falsity of those stereotypes and the subsequent oversimplification of Appalachia in both popular and academic discourses. These stereotypes reflect the articulation of progress as the antithesis of Appalachian populations, and in turn how Appalachian populations have been made legible through this juxtaposition. Scholars such as historians Ronald Eller (1982, 2008) and Ronald Lewis (1998) have dedicated their careers to extrapolating and analyzing the historical, cultural, and political use of this dynamic.

Indeed a wide breadth of scholarship dedicated to pulling back the veil of the homogenous, backwards *hillbillies* and revealing the richness of Appalachian culture and history is well established today. However, the same tired stereotypes still hold a degree of cultural sway, and the mere need to deploy an entire body of research to challenge such stereotypes betrays the continued resonance of Appalachia as the antithesis of contemporary notions of progress. This chapter analyzes how the socialization of class saturates contemporary conflicts, such that class appears natural, fixed, and even moral

through the rhetorical complexity of violence. That is, so far as violence is understood as the antithesis of ideals of progress as they are articulated today, populations associated with violence or who are understood as being violent can be marked as less valuable and socialized as lower class in a way that appears to be the natural order of things, the result of a moral or internal inferiority. Here, I use two common and heuristically valuable rhetorical analytics to parse out how violence is not only rhetorical, but also serves the crucial function of maintaining the socialization of class through rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control. As rhetoric is the communication discipline most doggedly committed to maintaining its alliance with democratic ideals of progress, analyzing the rhetorical relevance of violence within existing theoretical frameworks requires a recalibration of the implicit relationship between rhetoric and violence that underscores the impotence of simplistic dismissals of violence. Such analysis demonstrates how violence can be used to promote democratic ends, examines the varied ways violence relates to pressing rhetorical issues, and highlights how violence is inflicted upon populations socialized as lower class and less valuable. The hegemonic focus on physical, subjective violence and who has the rights to it render these other forms of violence barely visible. Because much of rhetorical theory is invested in the ideological dynamics of the juxtaposition between violence and progress, this analysis focuses on the politics of particular notions of progress through the class dimensions of rhetoric. Rhetoric, as a practice, is what makes the socialization process work and what makes the demarcation and stratification of classed populations seem natural rather than an achievement.

With regard to Appalachia, violence serves as the most lucid example of a

phenomenon rich with meaning that is used to divide and class populations. Violence is woven into the rhetorical climate in question. It is a phenomenon not only present in contemporary conflicts over MTR, but also one with a rich history in the region, suturing it to the way people understand the region, the conflict, and in turn how they speak about and (dis)identify with MTR. It also provides an opportunity to explore the varied manifestations of class, because an analysis of the politics of violence requires acute attention to the varied forms of violence that are being implicitly licensed against working- and lower class populations. Recall that residents of Greenbrier County argued against wind turbines primarily on the basis that it would disturb their viewshed and hinder the region's appeal to high-end travel clientele, while members of the CRMW were attempting to combat a process that was physically destroying the land and people in southern West Virginia's coalfields. The violence done to the land and its people in these two locations were not comparable, but they were roughly conflated in the argument against wind turbines. Greenbrier residents used a "not in my backyard" type of argument that is not afforded to the members of coal country. This allowed Greenbrier County residents to equate their inconvenience with the destruction of land in the southern part of the state, rejecting the wind turbines and allowing for a certain level of violence to be done to certain populations. Thus, the violence of progress comes down on various populations differently.

Certain ways of making sense of the world, of moving people, creating bonds, and making decisions are simultaneously functional in one context and dysfunctional in another. They are dysfunctional not because they don't work to organize the world and accomplish goals, but because they threaten institutions, spaces, and ideals associated

with contemporary ideals of progress. The unquestioned rejection of violence as a key pillar of progress in the contemporary world is far from a politically neutral commitment. This is what makes violence a useful and functional object of analysis in parsing out how class comes to appear natural or even moral in some cases. An analysis of how violence functions within the rhetorical climate of contemporary MTR conflicts draws out the complexity of violence and its various rhetorical functions. It also draws out how systemic violence is masked and even necessary to maintain commitments to progress, and in turn how those commitments to progress require violent populations as foils. Thus, populations associated with violence – like the people of Appalachia – are not just seen as less valuable, they are assumed to deserve that devaluation, because of their refusal or inability to adhere to ideals of progress.

This chapter will proceed in two stages. First, a discussion of how violence is and has been disassociated with progress and the theoretical analytics it animates, throws into relief both the popular and academic stakes of understanding the socialization of class. Two popular theoretical strands in rhetoric – prudence and publics – are discussed in terms of their implicit reliance on contemporary ideals of and commitments to progress. In each case, an aversion to violence is built into the analytic fibers of the theory. Analysis of how each has come to rely on and maintain the distinction between violence and rhetoric begins to parse out how such a distinction excludes populations whose value is cultivated against the backdrop of progress. In turn, this section begins to highlight the class dimensions of rhetoric through the politics of progress. Next, West Virginia's history of violence is analyzed as it relates to contemporary rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control. Various types of violence are discussed within the context of

contemporary MTR conflicts as a way of parsing out violence's complex rhetorical functions as well as how narrow or singular readings of violence maintain the socialization of class as it has been discussed here. That is, a reading of violence that considers its varied rhetorical dimensions is required if one is not to simply reiterate the socialization of class through unreflexive commitments to progress.

Rhetoric and the Politics of Progress

Rhetoric is the house Aristotle built, and that house has been visited by a variety of thinkers from across disciplines. Yet, despite theoretical innovations from all sides, rhetoric's soul has largely remained committed to the foundation of progress, particularly as articulated with regard to democracy. This is not to say these ideals are bad or should be completely abandoned; rather, they must be considered carefully with regard to their political implications. Two prominent theoretical analytics that have served as guides in the commitment to progressive, democratic politics have been prudence and publics, each proving heuristically productive benchmarks in rhetorical theory. As valuable and representative analytics, prudence and publics are compelling starting points for the analysis of how class, as an achievement, is related to rhetoric as a field and a practice. This is particularly productive because theoretical innovations in rhetoric often attempt to mirror and account for the ebbs and flows of legitimacy in the historical and contemporary world, or at least ideals about them, drawing a link between the politics of progress in both theory and practice.

Prudence

Prudence refers to the ability and willingness to speak and act within accepted standards in a given context so as to avoid being guilty of poor taste, offense, or creating feelings of danger. It is an implicit analytic, rarely summoned overtly in political or popular discourse, but used theoretically to conceptualize and organize the tensions between rhetoric, context, norms, and legitimacy. Prudence and its close relative *decorum* have long represented strong analytics for scholars invested in how speech and action are related to legitimacy. Decorum typically refers to appropriate behavior, focusing on a rhetorical act itself and extrapolating its correctness in a given context. For example, Leff (1987) describes decorum as a *principle of action* that can be used to track the adaptive powers of rhetoric from context to context. On the other hand, prudence typically emphasizes contextual rationality, cognition about what is appropriate or not in a given setting. The focus here is placed on cognition and the rhetorical negotiation of political climates. Thus, prudence has been adopted as the instrument for discussing such action as fluid and politically salient:

> Prudence is a performative concept to the extent that prudential thinking typically assumes a performative context. This context is often implicit, since prudence also denotes practical action by ordinary decision-makers possessing common knowledge and conventional skills; in short, one can speak of prudence when general assumptions about the mode and manner of conduct don't have to be specific. (Hariman, 1991, p. 27)

That is, prudence provides a conduit between standards or norms regarding what is acceptable in a given context and tendencies to perform in ways that adhere to such standards. Despite these differences, decorum and prudence may critically function in similar ways. According to Hariman (1992) and Hariman and Beer (1998), both concepts refer to abstractions that influence behavior and are validated by action.

As a performative phenomenon, prudence is not stagnant or determinant. Speakers and actors may choose deliberately not to adhere to certain notions of prudence or decorum (Kennedy, 1999) in an attempt to reject the values or configurations of power they privilege. More frequently, conflicting notions of prudence or decorum may operate in a single space. According to Kirt Wilson (1998), prudence "is a coveted space of legitimacy" (144). As one chooses one form of prudence, they necessarily reject another (Hariman, 1992). Consequently, prudence is always political. It continuously divides, unifies, and/or stratifies populations, because what is prudent refers to what is considered legitimate and proper within a given context, and not all actors in that context are going to align with what is prudent. By definition, what is considered prudent requires the existence of what is not; otherwise there is not contestation or reason to demarcate what is prudent in a context in the first place. Even when prudence remains implicit and unuttered, the division between what is legitimate as it relates to discourse, action, context, and rhetorical choices is deeply indebted to the political dynamics that vitalize the theoretical development of prudence.

Prudence is not a politically neutral analytic, but is the product of privilege, manifest in how populations are spoken for, mediated, and subsequently valued. This is because prudence is not merely an abstract and implicit analytic for judgment that is isolated to small, in-person contexts. What is considered prudent or correct in a given context is not always isolated to that context, but is judged by varied groups across time and space. Judgments about what is prudent or legitimate are not suspended when disparate populations engage one another, but are negotiated communicatively in spaces where access to communication resources are not equal. What is prudent or imprudent

becomes a matter of creating and maintaining distinctions between populations that can be organized communicatively. Thus, prudence is often determined by political dynamics that become hegemonic in broader contexts and imaginations. This imagination is related to a vocabulary that helps organize the world. Commonly accepted middle- and upper class vocabularies rely heavily on class distinctions through meaningful (dis)associations between populations and characteristics that either align or do not align with historical and popular associations. Similar to the way film (and other forms of representation) "reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle" (Mulvey, 1975, p. 6), class vocabularies create certain lenses for looking at particular populations. Commitments and assumptions that are enforced by political distinctions give prudence life, and the commitment to particular notions of progress – as has been discussed above – animates those distinctions both materially and abstractly.

Mediation disseminates context in a way that links prudence to the legibility of classed populations. The mobility necessary to mediate and make sense of a population, as well as the associations and language used in such mediation, influences the way classed populations are delegitimized and made to appear imprudent against the backdrop of ideals of civility and progress. Appalachian populations, as discussed earlier, have been mediated in specific ways that cast them as backwards, uneducated, homogenous, and dangerous. The symbols, words, and images associated with Appalachian populations are not entirely of their own making, but of northeastern journalists and color writers who visited the mountainous region in the late 1800s set in motion a pattern of

association that maintains its relevance today. These associations were, again, the product of middle- and upper class journalists, investors, and politicians, during times of economic downturn in the 1930s and the 1960s.

This is not to say that journalists and authors made conscious decisions to delegitimize Appalachian populations or to perpetuate the devaluation of the region, but journalists relied on a set of sensibilities regarding progress in America and a vocabulary to match those sensibilities that developed over time to articulate those populations as the antithesis of progress. To the extent that poor populations, in times of economic downturn, aligned with and enforced those vocabularies, they could be easily translated and framed for audiences around the country. In turn, some of the least enviable physical conditions have come to define and articulate Appalachian culture in popular American imagination, delegitimizing it as poor, violent, culturally backwards, and uneducated. Prudence is powerfully political in that it divides populations by creating in-groups (those that behave within expected parameters of legitimacy) and out-groups (those that fail or refuse to meet such expectations). Since Appalachians, particularly those in and around the region's coal fields, have been a vital and well-documented out-group for well over a century now, it is clear that broader notions of what constitutes legitimate behavior has – at least in part – been built on the back of Appalachian populations. What is more, because prudence is an analytic designed to demarcate the rhetorical cultivation of legitimacy, analyzing the relationship between rhetoric, conflicts in Appalachia, violence, and legitimacy provides the opportunity to explore one way in which rhetorical theory is sutured to the socialization of class as it has been discussed here.

Prudence, though often theorized as a matter of what actions are locally and

contextually negotiated as acceptable and legitimate, provides a way of exploring how different forms of life may produce different orientations to legitimacy. As those orientations have engaged one another via mediation, certain populations have become delegitimized, among them Appalachian populations. Over time, rural Appalachian communities have cultivated varied heterogeneous forms of life in response to the economic complexities of their region and its unique geography. In turn, the discourses and actions that are rational in a given context do not always align with broader notions of what is prudent or legitimate, especially since life in Appalachia has often ebbed and flowed with economic systems designed to suppress, impoverish, and stratify certain Appalachian populations. Because the concrete realities of class weigh so heavily on the cultivation of forms of life – particularly as a mark of failure (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2003) – they are also used to code and understand working- and lower class communities in a way that can implicitly moralize that failure, articulating the population as immoral and violent by nature, rather than as a population that has been devalued for generations, in part by the very vocabularies used to mediate them.

Prudence, or the ability to tap into broad notions of what is prudent as a way of making sense across contexts, is a privilege. In this case, the demarcation and delegitimization of certain forms of life in a way that aligns with how prudence has been used to understand legitimacy has been related to mediations of violence in Appalachia, and in West Virginia specifically. Key events, as will be discussed below, demonstrate how violence can be rhetorical both in its own context and as a historical touchstone for negotiating identity. Such events, however, are understood, framed, and mediated differently, in a way that narrows the understanding of violence and uses it to make sense

of the population. This underscores how violence is used to interpret populations as less valuable and to delegitimize them to the detriment of a more complex understanding of violence and a more conscious understanding of the politics of progress.

Publics and Public Spheres

Prudence is not the only rhetorical analytic indebted to ideals of progress. Publics and public sphere theory are also heavily sutured to these teleological commitments. Many of the foundational figures in public sphere theory (specifically Habermas and Dewey) were also key figures in the theorization of deliberative democracy in the West. Kent Ono (2003) discussed the tendency of public and counterpublic sphere theory in rhetoric to remain steadfastly committed to these thinkers and others in its own intellectual lineage, binding it to the political commitments of very particular notions of democracy, despite a multitude of compelling and important theoretical innovations regarding publics, public spheres, and counterpublic spheres, to name a few. As Kendall Phillips (1996) astutely pointed out 20 years ago, many of the assumptions that undergird public sphere theory color the field of rhetoric's understanding of democracy. Even more radical breaks, such as Michael Warner's (2002) critical intervention with regard to queer counterpublics, remain always conscious of the theoretical backdrop before which they work.

As discussed briefly in Chapter 1, an extensive body of literature has emerged to address the relationship between rhetoric and the constitution of publics, drawing from Habermas' (1989) idea of a public sphere, as well as Dewey's (1954) theorization of democratic morality and the importance of publics, and Fraser's (1992) critique of publics

in the form of counterpublics, among others. Habermas theorized the idea of an ideal public sphere, an abstract space where the free and open exchange of ideas could realize the dream of democracy. However, as Habermas rightly understood, such an ideal space does not and cannot exist. Even still, the public sphere as Habermas theorized it swept many intellectual traditions, and still helps ground much of today's rhetorical conversation on the matter. John Dewey saw publics as a rhetorical achievement, forwarding democracy as an imperative, both as an ideal and a practice necessary to moral action. Democracy for Dewey was implicated in the creation of publics, because publics were created when people communicated toward the resolution of civic issues. A public sphere's rhetorical construction, for Dewey and those inspired by him, should include a variety of perspectives (see also Hauser, 1999). Dewey's notion of publics and public spheres is older than Habermas' but has in many ways provided a corrective for rhetoricians seeking to recover the moral dimensions of rhetoric as an essential element of democracy.

Nancy Fraser forwarded the idea of counterpublics, primarily against the Habermasian understanding of publics, to account for inequities that prevent ideal public spaces from being realized. For some scholars, a counterpublic's ability to advance progressive commitments to radical democratic inclusion defines its very existence. Fraser's introduction of counterpublic spheres was itself a critique of the hegemonic tenor of Habermas' theory, emphasizing democratic constitutions of public life. Fraser, for example, questioned the emphasis on *rational* decision-making and asserted that the public sphere could not account for how subordinated populations, such as women, invented and circulated alternative identities (Fraser, 1992). Counterpublicity has been a

popular approach for scholars interested in questioning the patriarchal, heteronormative dimensions, not only of the public sphere as a theory, but also the political and social ebbs and flows it reflects (see Chávez, 2011; Dunn, 2010; Matar, 2007; Squires, 2002). It has been adopted as a way of arguing for the notion of multiple and overlapping publics and counterpublics as well as a more careful consideration of vernacular voices (Hauser, 1999), a task Dewey's work has been essential to as well (Asen, 2003).

As addressed in Chapter 1, public sphere theorists have discussed issues of class in the United States at some length, generally focusing on the way impoverished communities are eschewed from publics or the way poverty is constructed as a public issue. Asen has done the most extensive work on the complexity of class and public/counterpublic constitution. Asen (2009) contends that the configuration of concrete conditions and ideological strongholds in a given context stimulates some forms of counterpublicity while eschewing others. That is, the manifestation of counterpublics and the way counterpublicity is achieved cannot be based first on academic distinctions, but rather must emerge from the material and ideological conditions of exclusion that groups often respond to. Even in these more nuanced treatments of publicity, the commitment to progress remains vital to the academic treatment of counterpublics, a moral commitment that underscores the politics of progress. Within the ebbs and flows of public/counterpublic scholarship, forwarding a counterpublic – for many scholars – requires the critic both to direct an eye toward the relational constructions of power and voice in a given context, and to judge the potential of such publicity for promoting progressive democratic politics (see Asen, 2009; Brouwer & Asen, 2010). That is, the scholar has an explicit responsibility to gauge the progressive political potential –

presumably as it relates to ideals of democracy – of a counterpublic before naming it a counterpublic, making the designation itself an affirmation of political consequence. As a result, the theoretical treatment of publics – like prudence – is political in that it depends on commitments that stratify certain populations along the lines of intrinsic value imbued in such commitments.

I have argued elsewhere that violence can be used to articulate counterpublicity through the articulation of gender and class citizenship, the achievement of publicity, and in the formation and maintenance of enclaves (Richards, 2016). Because violence is coded as gendered in a way that affects both the violent actor and the object and/or survivor of violence (De Lauretis, 1985), violence can, in particular cases, disrupt gender dynamics and the distribution of power they rely upon and enforce, especially when violence has been key to gaining and maintain the oppression of a certain group. In a variety of cases, including the MTR disputes in question, gender and class are articulated together. As discussed in Chapter 3, gender roles are key to creating and maintaining West Virginia's coal culture. Consequently, using violence to transgress gender norms can and does challenge the socialization of class in coal country.

Additionally, enclaves have a prominent role in public/counterpublic theory, particularly with regard to the cultivation of oppositional identities. Catherine Squires (2002) uses *enclaves* to refer to these protected spaces. Enclaves create spaces for the interpretation of public rhetoric (Chávez, 2011). To groups that lack means to access places and spaces traditionally associated with safety and deliberation, violence can be a way of securing such spaces and even transforming public spaces so that they can be moved through and negotiated differently. That is, violence and the threat of violence

can change the salience of an oppressed body and in turn the space around it (Richards, 2016). The exclusion of violence as a legitimate way to affirm counterpublicity, or to negotiate meaning in the world more generally, is a symptom of progress's influence on theoretical development, without regard for anything inherent in the world or how people navigate it. This exclusion highlights a blindness to different histories and different systemic hurdles to achieving a public voice or counterpublicity.

The assumptions regarding what types of communication count as progressive, proper, and legitimate forms of rhetoric – assumptions that undergird concepts such as prudence or publics, particularly as they have come to secure contemporary meaning – demonstrate that the socialization of class is related to rhetoric as both a practice and a discipline. This link can make class appear to be natural or even moral if the demarcation of what is considered proper is not reflected upon carefully. Differences in language, posture, and behavior reflect different experiences, different ways of making sense of and understanding the world. This results in different ways of speaking about the world that may create gaps between academic theory and working- or lower class populations (Aune, 1994; Rose, 2005). In each case, violence is a phenomenon that is either implicitly excluded from the development of the analytic itself or is encouraged to be excluded from the analytic's application due to the moral imperatives of democracy. This theoretically narrows violence in a way that underscores how some influential strands of rhetorical theory risk reflecting the ebbs and flows of political ideals more so than the ebbs and flows of political and social world-making itself. Analyzing the class dimensions of rhetoric through its commitment to progress pushes back against this risk and seeks to open new paths for understanding both the politics of progress and the

varied relationships among class, rhetoric, and violence. In what follows, I discuss violence's place in historical and contemporary mining conflicts, its effects as and on rhetorics of identity, resistance and control, using both the analytics of prudence and publics to parse out the relationships. Both are used here as indicative of the broader commitments in the field. Therefore, this section samples these analytics to analyze the classed dimensions of rhetoric through the narrowing and oversimplifying of violence, further highlighting the politics of progress and how that politics undergirds much of rhetorical theory more broadly.

Violence in the Hills

Histories of violence, physical violence, threats of violence, and what was often called "violent rhetoric" were all prominent during the surge of MTR-related conflicts in question here, so prominent that state officials took steps to denounce and prevent violence in this context. In January 2010, Governor Manchin met with church officials, union representatives, and antiMTR activists, including Maria Gunnoe, to talk about the increase in violence and violent threats. In a public statement after the meeting, Manchin declared, "There is no place in West Virginia for violence. I won't tolerate violence and my West Virginia State Police won't tolerate it. We must have peaceful dialogue about these passionate issues" (cited in Hamill, 2010). That same month, in response to citizen concerns over violence and intimidation from industry supporters, Manchin again condemned violence generally, distancing himself, the state government, and the state itself from the practices of violence, saying, "We will not in any way, shape or form in this state of West Virginia tolerate any violence against anyone on any side… If you're

going to have the dialogue, have respect for each other" (cited in Ward Jr., 2010).

Not only is Machin condemning violence, he is going out of his way to make sure he asserts himself and his government as antiviolence. His statements themselves were little more than face-saving, as many antiMTR activists remained fearful of violent backlash. This sort of distancing, however, is a political imperative for a public official in America today. It is important to articulate one's self as opposed to violence, as on the side of peaceful dialogue. This keeps the focus on physical violence, because of course Manchin is implicitly referring to a narrow definition of violence; that is, subjective violence. In turn, distancing keeps the ire of moral outrage on those who would be violent in this way and keeps it away from the systemic objective violence that is carried out against coal communities. The narrowing of violence draws attention away from the shift from vertical to horizontal violence in the region and decontextualizes violence in a way that disproportionately associates working and lower class populations with the morally reprehensible dimension of violence.

A History to Claim: Blair Mountain

As discussed earlier, violence has been commonly associated with rural Appalachian populations. Its undeniable presence in the history of West Virginia and the state's evolution into a coal culture permeates accounts of the state's historical and contemporary coal conflicts (see Barry, 2012; Burns, 2005; D. A. Corbin & Sherwood, 1990; D. Corbin, 2011; Eller, 1982; House & Howard, 2009; Shnayerson, 2008; Shogan, 2006). No episode of violence is more famous, has had greater impact on the state's history and image, or is more frequently summoned in contemporary conflicts than the

Matewan Massacre, along with the subsequent Battle of Blair Mountain. These two events were the culmination of what came to be known as The West Virginia Mine Wars, a semiconnected series of violent confrontations between miners, mine guards, and law enforcement in the state between the early 1910s and early 1920s. The Matewan Massacre and the Battle of Blair Mountain reflect how violence has been used to delegitimize working-class Appalachians in the past, how the region's history of violence has become salient, and how that violent history impacts contemporary rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control.

The Matewan Massacre took place in 1920 on May 19. Sid Hatfield, prominer Sheriff of Matewan at the time, along with a number of miners and the town's mayor, Cabell Testerman, confronted a group of guards from the Baldwin-Felts Agency who were privately hired to protect company interests and intimidate miners. The guards were kicking miners out of their company homes, and Hatfield and Testerman demanded an explanation. What followed is marred in controversy. Witnesses gave contradictory and/or vague testimony under oath regarding the sequence of violent events.[12] What is known is that a shootout followed, resulting in the death of ten men, including Mayor Testerman as well as Albert and Lee Felts, heads of the Baldwen-Felts Agency.

The violence at Matewan Station put West Virginia on the national media map. Top reporters from around the nation were sent to southern West Virginia to report on the region and what set it apart from the rest of the country (D. A. Corbin & Sherwood, 1990). Hatfield's trial for the murder of Albert and Lee Felts was the center of that

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[12] I am referring here to my review of the archived case files for *The State vs Sid Hatfield et al* ("Case file State vs. Sid Hatfield et al, transcripts, jury selection, witness statements -originals and photocopies," 1921)

attention ("Matewan Murder Trial is Continued: Twenty-three Accused in shooting which 10 Died Give Bond," 1920, "More Charges in Matewan Case," 1920, "Nine are Killed: Blood Gun Battle Staged in Mining Town," 1920, "Twelve Killed in Battle with Mine Owners Detectives," 1920). In many ways, the violence of the events at Matewan Station gave working-class miners a new public voice, mostly in the form of the charming Sid Hatfield, who affectionately became known as "Smilin'" Sid Hatfield and "Two Gun" Sid Hatfield on account of his tendency to carry two pistols and pose with them for pictures. The guns undoubtedly sensationalized Hatfield, fitting neatly with the narrative of the violent shootout itself. For a time, the sensationalism of violence and the way it could be read with local characters and images provided working-class miners with a degree of publicity, which they could use to forward their critiques of the hegemonic coal industry. The UMWA even produced a short film about the events, *Smilin' Sid.* The narrative that emerged of the underdog miners was so far reaching that in 1987, it inspired the feature-length film *Matewan* (Sayles, 1987).

Hatfield was ultimately acquitted of any wrongdoing related to the Matewan Massacre, but his popularity and role in the shootout turned the labor disputes in southern West Virginia into a personal blood feud. For decades, opinions on the events at Matewan Station served as a gauge of one's loyalties in the region (Bailey, 2008). Hatfield was soon called to stand trial alongside his deputy and fellow prounion man Ed Chambers on trumped-up charges in traditionally antiunion McDowell County, West Virginia. McDowell County Sheriff William Hatfield guaranteed the safety of both Sid Hatfield and Chambers, but left the county days before they arrived. On August 1, 1921, as Hatfield and Chambers walked up the steps to the McDowell County Courthouse, they

were met with a barrage of gunfire. Three shooters, all of whom worked or had once worked for the Baldwin-Felts Agency, shot and killed the two prounion men. Both victims were unarmed, but to make it seem like Hatfield and Chambers shot first, agents shot into the brick walls, and placed guns on the two dead bodies as they lay at the courthouse entrance (Shogan, 2006).

Hatfield's death resonated as a turning point in the region. According to historian David Corbin:

> The killing of Hatfield probably was, as contemporaries and historians claim, the spark that prompted the armed march on Logan. The real significance of the event to the miners, however, is often lost; it involved much more than the murder of a regional folk hero. The murder was a violent demonstration of the destruction of the last refuge of justice that miners had…. (1981, p. 210)

In other words, this event brought the stakes of the situation to the forefront for miners and their families. Chris Holt, involved in the impending revolt at Blair Mountain, echoing this sentiment, contended that miners resented that one of their chief supporters and leaders was killed ("Interview with Chris Holt," n.d.). More than 2,000 people attended Sid Hatfield's funeral (Shogan, 2006), where Sam Montgomery, a union-supported state politician, eulogized Hatfield, saying, "Even the heavens weep with the grief-stricken relatives and bereaved friends" (McGuire, 1985). Miners and those who supported them began to, with increased sharpness, recognize not only their identity as an oppressed group, but also the conditions of their oppression and how little protection they were afforded. Such recognition is key in the formation of a counterpublic. The addition of "counter" to "public" is constituted when groups recognize their exclusion from a broader hegemonic public and are able to make particular inequities publicly recognized (Asen, 2000). In this case, the violent death of a key prominer public official threw

violence and the threat of violence into relief as mechanisms of oppression and control.

In response, miners marched toward Logan County in the closing days of August 1921 to forcefully overtake nonunion mines and attempt to force the expansion of unions and union protection for miners. Desperate miners from all over the state, with varied complaints against the mining industry, descended on southern West Virginia.[13] Miners attacked infrastructure set up by companies and made themselves strategically self-sufficient. They cut key communication lines, hijacked company-owned trains, set up their own medical facilities, and utilized a highly organized and secretive informal network to move miners, food, and supplies. Approximations range from 7,000 to 20,000 miners involved in the march itself. However, regardless of the number of marchers, it is estimated that substantially more miners, families, and other working-class citizens actively aided the marchers (D. Corbin, 1981).

The battle itself was violent but short lived. Mine owners and agents used two powerful machine guns to stave off the attacking miners. Small biplanes dropped pipe bombs and tear gas on miners as well, although they were largely ineffective. Miners made headway with a Gatling gun they stole from a company store, but machine gun and rifle fire from the other side's advantageous higher elevation prevented the miners from ultimately overtaking the mountain.

On September 1, federal troops arrived to quell the violence. As troops surrounded, miners were generally content to retreat. Understanding they were overmatched and believing federal attention boded well for their cause, miners celebrated

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[13] Some speculate that the miners weren't really trying to injure or kill operators or guards, that their intention was only to scare. For example, see ("Interview with Bill Blizzard," n.d.).

their "victory" in the streets of the state capital. The miners failed to realize fully that they were not simply striking out against mine operators, but against a constellation of forces that included the state and federal government. The federal government prepared to drop the matter altogether, uninterested in exposing the financial ties between federal officials and the mining industry. West Virginia's state government came down on the rebellious miners, charging union or otherwise rebellious leaders with treason.

For their part, mine operators dismissed the revolt as the result of radical political influence, at the expense of the actual conditions in the region. Playing off fears of communism and socialism that ran rampant at the time (see Goldberg, 1996), operators worked to carefully frame the revolt as unAmerican and criminal. In a letter to President Harding, the Logan Coal Operators Association accused the miners of "lawlessness" and "murderous violence," asserting that these actions had no regard for the apparatuses of government (Thurmond, n.d.). Additionally, the Logan District Mines Information Bureau distributed a pamphlet about the Battle of Blair Mountain, referring to the revolting miners as "armed invaders," accusing them of looting stores and forcing men and boys to fight ("Battle of Blair Mountain: Before and after," 1921). Journalists from publications such as *The Nation* perpetuated this frame, emphasizing stereotypes and discussing how miners carried rifles with the indifference of a man carrying a stick (Blankenhorn, 1990).

The revolting miners were strongly and negatively associated with violence, and their violence was articulated as lawless. Focusing on subjective violence from the working class, miners perpetuated the ideology of subjective violence, drawing attention away from the systemic violence imposed on them by the coal industry. In fact, the

miners believed that media attention would raise awareness about and force change in their conditions. Not only did the attention bring little improvement for the miners, conditions actually worsened as unions lost a great deal of influence in the region. The violent revolt was framed by powerful, wealthy, and influential mine operators and outside journalists who utilized the narrative of the violent working- and lower-class hillbilly – though for very different reasons – to understand the events. What constituted an appropriate or prudent response from the miners was not determined through close attention to the conditions they responded to, but was framed within the simultaneous alignment of working- and lower-class populations, with violence and the construction of violence as the antitheses of progress in America. While violence provided publicity, it also provided the rhetorical means to dismiss and delegitimize the miners. This is because the narrowing of violence into a focus on subjective violence is vital to maintaining the current order of industrial progress, even – perhaps especially – in democratic contexts (Badiou, 2012).

Tapping into a Violent History

The miners were, at the time, dismissed for their violent disregard for law and order, but the protest itself has lived on in local lore as something quite different. It represents, for many, the rebellious nature of West Virginians, their refusal to be taken advantage of, and their insistence on fighting for their rights. In that, the West Virginia Mine Wars are sometimes romanticized among many West Virginians and Appalachian scholars alike. Reflecting upon how rhetorical appeals depend on and attempt to transform the socialization of class as an historical process also highlights the importance

of certain articulations of progress with regard to the very production of scholarly engagements with class. Scholars like Carol Blair (1992) and Phillips (1996) have established that one perspective on history can work to shroud alternative forms of rhetoric. Approaches to rhetoric, social movements, and history rely implicitly upon progress as a guide for the linear organization of rhetorical flows and disruptions. In other words, rhetoric as a scholarly field is often organized so that rhetorics contributing to contemporary notions of progress are highlighted, and linear narratives regarding rhetoric as a tool of progress emerge. These events and their canonical place in the state's history make them important touchstones in contemporary debates over MTR, as they provide points of articulation for resistive identities. They also provide an alternative, differently articulated relationship between violence and credibility that challenges the narrowing of violence encouraged by ideological commitments to progress and democracy. The summoning of this violent revolt both demonstrates the rhetorical potency of violence beyond its physical immediacy and further underscores the ideological importance subjective violence maintains in contemporary ways of ordering the world.

One way the violent history of the state, particularly the Battle of Blair Mountain, has become a lynchpin is in forwarding a culture and heritage for many West Virginians, especially as a challenge to the state's coal culture. For example, 2011 was the 90-year anniversary of the Battle of Blair Mountain. The anniversary of the event provided a kairodic opportunity to appropriate the state's violent past into contemporary conflicts. In the summer of 2011, a concert and subsequent five-day march designed to mimic the march of the miners in 1921 was organized to protest MTR practices in the state (Nyden,

2011).

The simultaneous commitment to the symbols and strategic use of this violent history (be it conscious or unconscious) reflects a key rhetorical link between time and violence. Bradford Vivian (2013) most lucidly discusses this link. Drawing from prominent social critics and philosophers such as Žižek, Gramsci, Foucault, Derrida, and Eagleton, Vivian contends that communal and institutional practices create temporal folds to appropriate legacies of violence in a way that makes a particular moral analytic legible in the contemporary world. Vivian focuses on atrocities such as genocides in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur, as well as the Holocaust. He argues that such atrocities are aesthetically comodified to be consumed toward the fulfillment of some moral hunger, to expunge populations of guilt and to appropriate violent experiences. According to Vivian (2013):

> Throngs of contemporary tragedy tourists presume that one may achieve morally beneficial intersubjective identification with victims of historical atrocity by participating in consumer leisure activities, that the victims' time of suffering may be fully intelligible and redeemable in our own. (p. 213)

Right or wrong, the political truths that animate liberal, democratic discourses and institutions require the impossible task of speaking for and about such atrocities. These *truths* are sutured to teleological commitments to progress that exclude violence as a political ideal and hold tight to the abovementioned dream of a politics and a world washed clean of violence.

The fold between 1921 and 2011 presents a different yet complementary relationship among time, violence, and its third partner, morality. It brings into focus the function of violence in the socialization of class. The violent history of mine disputes provides an institutional and communal touchstone in contemporary mining conflicts.

This is true both in and out of the state itself, with those personally invested in the conflict and those attempting to make sense of it for broader audiences. For those fighting against MTR, the injustice that drove miners to march on Logan County mines is key to formulating an alternative history to the one presented by mining companies and the state government, tapping into the state's mining history and identification with miners to forward environmental concerns regarding mining. In this way, antiMTR activists are trying to recalibrate the conflict vertically, against rich and powerful mine owners rather than fellow working- and lower class community members. Simulating the march itself and articulating it as an ancestor of contemporary movement allows activists to sequester the noble and romantic ideal of those miners who fought the coal industry. However, this translates physical suffering and fighting (guns and blood) into the moral high ground for rhetorical purposes. That is, the contemporary aversion to violence as the antithesis to the political project of progress requires activists to – consciously or not – translate the state's violent history into the moral warrants for one's position, distancing themselves from violence while holding on high a violent revolt. So, while violence is a way of framing and understanding these working- and lower class groups as less valuable and antithetical to ideals of progress, it functions as a local source of strength, making it important for activists to constantly nuance their position to account for the broader, political narrowing of violence.

The translation process is accomplished through framing both the historical movement and the contemporary conflict. For example, in the CRMW Messenger, Brandon Nida describes the importance of Blair Mountain as an historical site and the need to protect it from MTR:

> Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia, was the site of the largest open class war in U.S. history. In 1921, after a generation of violent suppression and exploitation of the people in the southern coalfields of WV, 15,000 coal miners rebelled in an attempt to overthrow the control of coal barons. Today, with mountaintop removal threatening Blair Mountain's future, Friends of Blair Mountain are planning an epic enactment of the 1921 march, to call attention to the need to protect the mountain and its history. (Nida, 2011, p. 7)

The framing of this heritage reflects the general desire to distance oneself from associations with violence, even while directly tapping into violent rebellion for inspiration and legitimacy. Nida explicitly states that the enactment is designed to call attention to activist efforts to protect the mountains and the culture therein, drawing attention to the violence MTR causes in places with historical and cultural significance, such as Blair Mountain. The violent history becomes a way of reframing violence and challenging the configurations of marginalization and forwarding a resistive identity, a significant step in the articulation of counterpublicity. Just like Sid Hatfield's death helped local miners recognize their exclusion and motivated them to put their oppression on the map, the Battle of Blair Mountain functions here to make contemporary exclusions legible and to articulate modern forms of oppression and devaluation. The violence of Blair Mountain is, here, appropriated and dislodged from the associations immediately forwarded after the march itself and rearticulates that history as a way of putting the devaluation of West Virginia's coalfields on the public agenda.

The rearticulation of Blair Mountain's violence as a way of framing contemporary environmental conflicts was common. Nida, Barbara Rasmussen, and Harvard Ayers also write in a *Charleston Gazette* editorial that contemporary struggles against MTR were *extensions* of the Battle of Blair Mountain:

> The Friends of Blair Mountain recognizes present-day tactics by the coal operators that hark back to 1920 and before. Instead of playing off the local miners against

> people of different ethnic groups, the companies are now attempting to play the miners against the citizens who want to protect their communities and themselves from being poisoned and afflicted with cancer due to mountaintop removal operations. (Nida, Rasmussen, & Ayers, 2011)

The authors link contemporary coal operators to their early 20th century predecessors. Coal operators are described as violent, highlighting not only their uses of physical, subjective violence and intimidation, but also the systemic uses of violence and more explicitly the manipulation of orientations of violence from vertical to horizontal. This excerpt echoes previously cited concerns over how the coal industry broadly encourages horizontal violence among communities in an attempt to sustain the state's coal culture.

Excerpts like this one also underscore a complex function of violence as it relates to the socialization of class in another way. In the case of the coal industry, institutionally encouraged violence relies on the narrowing of violence to delegitimize working-class populations and create substantial rifts between communities. The authors here refer to the fact that violence and conflict were actually encouraged in coal camps. Mine operators would bring in large groups with different ethnic and racial backgrounds and section them off within the town, creating isolation among ethnic groups. Operators also brought in groups with different backgrounds as scabs during strikes, fanning the flames of racism through fears over loss of work and discouraging workers from uniting across racial lines. If violence and conflict are actively encouraged, then subjective violence, even though it is understood more broadly as appalling and immoral, might well be a necessary way to engage in the world-making process in the context of these camps. The rhetorical effects of dividing populations and negotiating power dynamics in the camp are undeniable. Thus, the delegitimization of that type of violence in the immediate aftermath of the Matewan Massacre and The Battle of Blair Mountain and implied through

contemporary articulations of the event demonstrates how political ideas about what is prudent or legitimate extend across time and space. The political ideal of progress strongly undergirds the salience of actions such as violence, particularly as they are related to working- and lower class populations. That is, to delegitimize a population for its use of violence when that population has been put in a context where violence is encouraged and cultivated shows how particular types of violence become so powerfully ideological when read within commitments to progress.

As scholars well-removed from the context in question, it is easy to identify the politics of such violence, but the fact that violence is delegitimized when it is mediated more broadly across time and space demonstrates that the same abstract judgments regarding legitimacy that animate prudence also animate how certain populations are judged by others, particularly when those populations are associated with violence like the *Appalachian hillbilly* so often is. Here the politics of delegalizing populations through their use of violence can – at least in some cases – be part of the socialization of class over time, remaining blind to the contexts of systemic violence against populations, lands, and cultures. This is not to say all acts of violence are justified or that every act of violence will reflect the violence of global capitalism, democracy, and progress. Rather it is to say that the automatic narrowing of violence, which is so common in Western ways of thinking and weighty in the development of rhetorical theory with a moral commitment to democracy, is politically charged and draws upon the same historical and ideological processes that devalue working- and lower class populations.

This is one way of parsing out the class dimensions of rhetoric as a practice and a field of inquiry. Here, activists distance themselves and their cause from horizontal

violence, articulating it as a product of industrialism and the coal industry's expansion in the state. Instead it reframes and translates the conflict as vertical and uses Blair Mountain as a moral touchstone, identifying it as the correct kind of conflict, the kind supported by those opposing MTR in the interest of all community members in the region. While converting the state's violent history into a progressive history that combats the hegemony of the state's coal culture may work locally, it is also predicated on cultural ties between rural Appalachian populations and violence that have been key to delegitimizing them, and so such conversion could still risk enforcing those associations.

Blair Mountain has also been pivotal to how outside groups attempt to make sense of MTR conflicts. In 2011, CNN ran a story on Blair Mountain, a story that some activists (Ayers, 2011) claim missed the mark in terms of the site's historical significance and the true stakes of the contemporary conflict. The documentary was titled "The Battle for Blair Mountain: Working in America". This title is an appropriation of the well-known Battle *of* Blair Mountain, unintentionally highlighting the efficiency with which the coal industry has shifted the conflict from itself and its workers to a conflict between and among the working class. According to the documentary's host, Soledad O'Brien, Blair Mountain is "a metaphor for what is the future of coal going to be in this community [of Blair]. It's not really about Blair Mountain. It's about what people value, what the future is going to be and the battle over jobs" (cited in Hoffman, 2011, p. 2A).

Though violence is certainly present in MTR conflicts during the time in question, it is not an outright battle in the same way. There are no organized unions marching and firing on mines. There are no Gatling guns firing down at activists or miners. Still, the vocabulary of violence remains relevant. It was on this occasion, this anniversary of

violence, that CNN chose to focus its attention on the area, harnessing violent vocabularies to discuss rural West Virginia and mining-related disputes therein. Such a choice is not surprising, as it once again demonstrates how middle- and upper class vocabularies employed to mediate populations rely on certain associations and disassociations with political consequences. Of course, the use of Blair Mountain as a metaphor for West Virginia's future likely was not malice, nor did it intentionally tap into the delegitimization of rural mining communities through violence. However, its use does demonstrate how powerful those vocabularies are and how powerful violence can be for making sense of the world. This historical touchstone of violence in Appalachia was used not only to highlight contemporary conflicts in the region, but also to make sense of the region for a broader audience.

Violence in Contemporary Conflicts

Violence has been part of contemporary conflicts over MTR outside the historical relevance of Blair Mountain. In 2009, the director of the American Friends Service Committee W.Va. Economic Justice Project, Rick Wilson, compared the fight over MTR to a Greek tragedy, explicating that only "rational deliberation, democracy and the rule of law" (R. Wilson, 2009, p. 1E) can bring an end to generations of violence. The comparison is an apt one. Generations of violence plague West Virginia's mining disputes. Physical violence and threats of violence remain part of contemporary conflicts. While this makes for the continued articulation of the Appalachians as backwards, it also – in light of this project – requires attention in terms of its varied rhetorical functions.

Violence has been used as both a direct and indirect means of control on the part of

the coal industry and interested governing parties. Nowhere is violence's role in negotiating legitimacy more clear than in Don Blankenship's rise to power. Recall from Chapter 2 that Blankenship was threatened and even shot at during disputes between Massey Energy and union workers in the mid-1980s. According to Shnayerson (2008), the violence used by union miners extended even further. Strikers blocked entrances with baseball bats and even became snipers, shooting at nonunion miners and company officials from nearby trees. Blankenship was rewarded for his survival and the reduction of Massey union mines and miners, through elevation within the corporate structure of Massey. Blankenship kept a memento of the violence in his office, in the form of a TV with a bullet in it, a bullet apparently intended for him when a miner shot through his office window. Blankenship's ability to survive the violent attacks of miners added legitimacy to his victory, because it proved his mettle in the region and legitimized the mine operator's cause. The violence of the miners could become part of Blankenship's ethos, a point of pride locally and a juxtaposition he could support to legitimize himself in the conflict. He not only stood up to the miners, he survived and thrived as the *businessman* rather than the *violent miner*. Once again, the monopoly over violence enjoyed by powerful institutions is underscored in how legitimacy is distributed with regard to violence. Blankenship was legitimized through his survival of subjective violence as well as his ability to expand systemic violence in the region.

Being the target of violence, however, can be a source of legitimacy and strength for both sides. For example, activists in the CRMW and other grassroots environmental groups in the region remain diligently nonviolent. As such, activists and, in many ways, interested scholars on the topic are quick to point out how antiMTR groups/individuals are

constant targets of violence and harassment, and that such violence violates their rights and threatens their day-to-day lives. This tactic of associating one's opponents with violence, even baiting one's opponents into violence, has long been a part of social movements in the United States (Bowers, Ochs, Jensen, & Schultz, 2010). Activists in these cases attempt to make the violence of the coal industry more material, focusing on cases of subjective, personal violence. In 2009, the CRMW headquarters was vandalized with images of bulldozers painted onto the rolling mountains that grace the side of the building. Many in the organization took the vandalism as a threat (James, 2009). Undeterred, the CRMW then painted images of protestors chained to the bulldozers, holding banners with an antiMTR slogan. While activists worked, they were harassed and threatened by passing motorists. In another case, Cordelia Ruth Tucker, a 54-year-old West Virginia woman who confronted environmentalists in June of 2009, slapped Judy Bonds. Such violence along with threats on her life led Bonds to carry a handgun and check her car for explosives before she got in it (Smith, 2009). These cases are often used in academic and journalistic accounts of MTR conflicts in the region as a way of clarifying the fight that activists face, painting a picture of the systemic and communal pressures against environmental activism, and in some ways, making activists more sympathetic figures. Violence here is used to frame these activists as victims. As the targets of violence – particularly insofar as they maintain their nonviolent approach – activists are implicitly understood as being on the right side of the conflict.

There is not just an imperative need to disassociate one's side with violence, but there is also legitimacy and value that come from being the target of violence in these contemporary discourses. Subjective violence is a powerful rhetorical tool here. It is

deeply engrained in both rhetorics of resistance and control as a negative phenomenon, a response to conflict that is imprudent and inappropriate. Despite the fact that violence and the threat of violence are very real, it is clear that the unspoken judgment on violence permeates the rhetorical landscape so long as it can be clearly highlighted and associated with one side or the other. Here, the prudential thinking does not always match the performative context. In turn, acts of violence, when they are drawn out in rhetorics of resistance and control, may come to be associated with the people of the region, implicitly perpetuating the same tropes about Appalachian people that have been discussed throughout this project. Even when activists rely on narrow and simplistic discussions of violence, they risk potentially contributing to the political diversion away from systemic violence.

Some antiMTR voices are conscious of the need to engage violence as a way of reflecting upon the broader socialization of class in the form of devalued Appalachian populations. The use of violence against antiMTR advocates throws into some relief the devaluation of Appalachian citizens and how violence is used to maintain particular political dynamics. A letter to the editor in the *Charleston Gazette* summarized the violence done to activists and the stakes thereof:

> Why haven't West Virginia officials condemned violence directed toward opponents of mountaintop removal? I attended a June 23 rally at Marsh Fork and heard numerous death threats hurled at the speakers. I also witnessed an attack on Judy Bonds. Over the July 4 weekend at Kayford Mountain, laid-off Massey workers terrorized festival participants. In a video viewable online, you can hear one of the assaulters threaten to slit the throats of a man's two young children. There have been over 100 documented cases of violence against Larry Gibson, including the murders of his dogs. I have talked to several coalfield residents who are afraid to leave their homes because they received arson threats. One mountaintop removal critic with children has to constantly change vehicles because she has been run off the road on more than one occasion.
> This violence is not sporadic lashing out by a few bad apples. It is a systematic

> attempt to terrorize dissenters to "shut up" - an affront that should be alarming to all Americans, regardless of what state they live in.
> The conspicuous silence of West Virginia officials regarding this violence is at best an indication of indifference toward the lives of mountaintop removal opponents and at worst an implicit encouragement of the terroristic tactics. (Wood, 2009, p. 4A)

Wood points out the implicit link between value and violence. Violent populations may be devalued, but that works in a variety of ways. Here, because rural Appalachian bodies lack a certain amount of value, particularly if those bodies do not adhere to the rhetorical patterns of behaviors and values produced through the state's coal culture, those bodies lack the value to spark the outrage that often follows violence. Those who favor the industry – according to this excerpt – are afforded some degree of lenience in the use of violence against devalued populations. This has in some cases worked, as activists have quit their activism or moved away for fear of their lives or from pure exhaustion.

The shift from vertical conflict and violence to horizontal is also vital to this devaluation of Appalachia, particularly working- and lower class populations in the region. While much of the violence in the state's labor history is vertical (that is, it is directed upward or downward with regard to the stratification of populations) more contemporary violence – as has been demonstrated in many of these cases above – is often horizontal, between neighbors. This means that the social salience of violence is deployed not against the mine operators, but against other community members themselves. For example, CRMW activist Lorelei Scarbro claimed that the group was the victim of violent backlash during a June 23, 2009 protest at Marsh Fork Elementary, and that it was just what the mining companies wanted:

> The people I stood with at Marsh Fork Elementary on June 23 were totally committed to non-violence on that day.
> We were met with anger and rage. We were attacked, ridiculed, pushed, shoved,

> had air horns blasted in our ears and were spat upon, and there were many video cameras running to prove this.
> I believe Massey Energy wants neighbor against neighbor and that is certainly what happened that day. (Scarbro, 2009)

Once again, Scarbro carefully inserts herself, her organization, and her cause on the side of nonviolence. She juxtaposes antiMTR groups to their critics, pinning her opposition to the side of backwards violence and undemocratic negotiation. However, it is the last line that is telling. Scarbro asserts that Massey wants neighbor to fight neighbor, implicitly indicating that the mining company benefits from horizontal violence. This violence is turned inward on working-class communities in a way that delegitimizes working-class populations and gainsays attention to inequalities built into the coal industry and the sacrifice zones it requires. To the extent that the violence coming from the coal industry and its history in the state are highlighted, it can be attributed to individual working-class community members rather than the industry and the dynamics necessary to maintain the state's coal culture. This distances institutions from violence while coal communities feel the sting of both the social and physical effects of violence.

There is even fear that the coal culture of West Virginia and the discourse it propagates encourages not just disputes against communities, but also violence against activists. In an article in the *Charleston Gazette*, Charleston author Denise Giardina (2007) expressed fears that hyperbolic and misleading attacks on antiMTR activists in public discourse can and will lead to violence. After antiMTR protests and arrests in 2009, the late Larry Gibson hosted his annual July 4th music festival on Kayford Mountain. Gibson and other activists feared violent backlash against the festival. Gibson himself had received a variety of threats (Nyden, 2009). However, Gibson persevered and juxtaposed his festival to the violence with small-town charm, "Everyone is welcome. Bring a

covered dish. But this is not a place for any kind of violence. But bring a conversation to the table. I would be glad to talk to anyone" (Nyden, 2009, p. 8A). Gibson acknowledges the threat he felt and implicitly links the promining community with violence as a way of delegitimizing them. What's more, he underscores the fear many activists have about how the state's coal culture encourages violence against those speaking out against MTR. This demonstrates that violence has been and remains a mechanism of control, a tool used to establish and maintain marginalization and stratification within coal communities. In turn, it also demonstrates the importance of understanding how activists challenge that mechanism of control and the political consequences thereof.

The use of violence horizontally among working-class populations to both threaten and delegitimize others is taken to its logical extension when it is asserted as a matter of nature. That is, when violence is not a tactic, but is framed as part of a group's very way of being, it juxtaposes the population against the ideals of deliberation and progress that are so valued. Judy Bonds, for example, on many occasions asserted that locals who supported mining and MTR are *violent by nature*. In one interview, Bonds contended that she would not engage particular miner and promining groups because they were violent people (civicallyengaged, 2009). This reflects violence as rhetorically loaded in a way that seamlessly transitions to speak for the nature or the internal character of the person who is perceived as violent. When this is directed at other community members, the violence used and even encouraged to take place between working-class community members becomes a way of asserting something about someone's nature, their moral fiber. Because violence is linked so strongly to broader articulations of and narratives about working-class Appalachian populations, it is hard to imagine such assertions not coming

to be used to understand the situation as a whole rather than to differentiate between sides. Deploying the same articulations of violence used to devalue the entire region in the past, community members, activists, miners, MTR supporters, and MTR opponents risk perpetuating the frames of violence built on and through Appalachian and specifically West Virginian populations. Those can be strong tactics in the short term, but may forward the political narrowing of violence in the long term. The violence, perceived violence, and fear of violence from working-class community members become *the* violence of concern, gainsaying the violence done to ecosystems and populations. That sort of systemic violence is of course recognized by activists, but does not register as violence in the same way. That is, it does not have the relationship with legitimacy and civility in the same way, because that type of violence is required for the continuation of capital progress.

This follows the shift from vertical disputes to horizontal disputes in a way that may implicitly enforce the socialization of class as natural through violence's antithetical relationship to progress and the cultivation of such violence through West Virginia's coal culture. Activists must constantly frame themselves as nonviolent because they are speaking out against powerful institutions, such as the coal industry, the state government, and the federal government. The tactic of violence and threat is not available to them in the same way. This is demonstrated in their constant distancing of themselves from violence. The coal industry and even the state are able to negotiate and implement policies that put countless miners and their families at risk. They are able to destroy and pollute lands without being dismissed or critiqued for their violence, nor for being out of sync with a commitment to deliberation, democracy, capitalism and progress. Despite the

state's explicit repudiation of violence, when coal supporters are violent, antiMTR activists do not feel protected. Due to the devaluation of these working- and lower class populations, violence between community members is an issue; in some cases it provides a well-known frame for understanding and making sense of conflicts in this region, since Appalachia has long been associated with violence. All the same, activists and miners seem to face disproportionate pressure not only to avoid violence, but to actively reject it for fear that violence will overshadow their concerns and challenges or legitimize their enemies. The progressive imperative against violence is not applied equally because not all types of violence are considered equal. Here and in other cases, the demand of nonviolence is applied disproportionately to marginalized groups, creating more hurdles for these groups and reflecting that different types of violence have different rhetorical effects.

In each abovementioned case, subjective violence is responded to as an evil. Survivors or targets of violence (be they Don Blankenship or Judy Bonds) take the moral high ground and gain credibility within their respective camps through the experience of facing a violent enemy. Within the rhetorical terrain of contemporary MTR conflicts, the distinction between certain kinds of violence and progress is generally maintained, almost explicitly for rhetorical and political purposes. However, as I stated above, not all violence is created equal under the contemporary rubric of progress. Violence is configured into contemporary conflicts in a way that generally perpetuates the socialization of class by making it harder for marginalized groups to gain footing and create new articulations of value that are counter to the state's coal culture. This highlights the rhetorical distinction between legitimacy and violence in the contemporary

world, produced in part as a result of the mediation of Appalachia over the past 100-plus years, and the actual acts of violence carried out by those in the region.

Though the theoretical impulse against violence and the political ideal it reflects may be generally positive and born of upright intentions, it cannot be pursued to the exclusion of violence in its complex contemporary rhetorical manifestations. The need to convert and translate violence into intelligible and credible associations based on its position as a foil for progress circumvents lived experiences and concrete as well as ideological conditions that might engender such violence. The prefabricated distinction between violence and progressive ideals is historically built on the backs of marginalized populations. Populations that have been marginalized and suffer the various manifestations of class as a result of industry growth must be necessarily devalued. Violence has become one way of accomplishing just that. These populations suffer violence as part of being lower class, but it is not recognized as violence in the same way that individual acts of violence are. Those individual acts are informally outlawed, coming with the automatic dismissal of one's challenge or legitimacy. Consequently, government and private industries such as coal have taken a monopoly over formally and informally legitimate uses of violence. These uses are not legitimized as good violence, but are not considered violence at all under the narrow and simplistic understandings that hold political sway in the contemporary world. They can and do use and encourage violence in a given context as a way of drawing attention away from the rifts they rely on to maintain dependent and devalued populations, while violence is available to control marginalized groups.

In the case in question, violence is part of the world-making process. It is part of

the history of mining in West Virginia and in many ways a proud part of that history. Activists strive to be on the right side of the ideological distinction between rhetoric and violence, but in so doing must associate others in the rural community with violence, even going so far in some cases as to say that inclination toward violence is natural. This may also risk enforcing associations that create and maintain the socialization of class more broadly and perpetuate local divisions that ultimately benefit and sustain the state's coal culture. This further underscores how the present link between violence and progress is both the result of a history of marginalizing groups socialized as lower class and is also a tool used to maintain and manifest that devaluation.

Violence within the contemporary analytic of progress has been and remains a powerful rhetorical tool, one that stratifies populations along lines of class as a moral marker as well as a matter of income. To maintain the political distinction between violence and rhetoric, or more colloquially violence and legitimacy, without reflecting on the forms and histories of oppression that violence might speak to, cannot help but perpetuate the political dynamics of the current teleological commitments to progress, commitments that depend on the degradation of certain populations along the lines of value in the rhetorical marketplace. The narrowing of violence in public discourses to subjective violence is one of the key problems. This draws attention away from the massive violence that capitalism brings down on certain populations. Violence's relationship to what constitutes proper or acceptable rhetoric then reflects how class dynamics are built into rhetorics of practice. In turn, because violence is still far too often understood as rhetoric's other, rhetoric's opposition, rhetorical theory's too often unreflexive indebtedness to progress does not just miss the complexity of violence, but

also risks silently licensing the devaluation of certain populations. As such, violence represents one key nodal point in the maintenance of class as a socialized phenomenon, a nodal point bursting with rhetorical energy that far exceeds the simple juxtaposition between rhetoric and physical violence.

Conclusion: Missing the Forest for the Trees

Violence – in various forms – is vital to contemporary MTR conflict, particularly in the establishment and negotiation of credibility, identity, and morality. Focused attention on violence as a key part of the socialization of class provides three benefits. First, attention to the local salience of violence demonstrates its complex rhetorical functions. The use of violence to negotiate concerns, identities, political landscapes, and the legibility of culture far outpaces the output of scholarship on the matter, particularly in the field of rhetoric. The violent history of West Virginia and mining in the state is crucial to both activists and the coal industry. Both tap into violence differently as a way of negotiating identity and credibility. Additionally, that history is used to make sense of contemporary conflicts, demonstrating how violence is part of the broader narrative about Appalachia, and West Virginia specifically. Conflicting orientations to and definitions of violence affect populations differently, allowing for some forms of violence to go unnoticed while accenting other forms. Attention to physical violence and the perceived threat thereof in Appalachia more often than not creates blind spots towards systemic violence to ecosystems and populations, making violence a key rhetorical phenomenon in the achievement and maintenance of rifts among classes. Without a complex treatment of violence and its varied rhetorical effects, any analysis of these conflicts would be

incomplete, or worse, perpetuate the same tired stereotypes about a violent and implicitly immoral poor population.

In turn, violence helps illustrate the rhetorical dimension of class. Class and rhetoric are fundamentally linked because the ideals that undergird hegemonic values and discourses also demand a particular standard, normative interpretations of and orientations to violence. As populations diverge from these standards, their legibility is altered; they are socialized into broader ideals and vocabularies as marginal, less valuable, and subsequently classed. Violence is particularly useful in this regard because it has been so prevalent in the cultivation of progress as an ideal, particularly as the ideal has been historically juxtaposed to Appalachia as a sacrifice zone. The relationships among violence, credibility, legitimacy, and the negotiation of public concern are often implicitly indebted to the narrowing of violence to a simplistic view of subjective violence as the antithesis of progressive, democratic ideals. What is more, this risks making divergence from such commitments appear natural, or in the case of violence specifically, moral. Considering violence in more detail, in its varied forms and relations to the world-making process and within the specific history of how a given population has been devalued, provides a way to unpack the complexities of violence and the politics of its dismissal. Outright ignoring the use of violence as a rhetorical phenomenon risks delegitimizing entire populations along the same rubrics of value that encourage and cultivate violence there in the first place.

Consequently, this analysis grapples with unspoken political dynamics within rhetorical theory. Though of course exceptions exist, much of rhetorical theory is deeply indebted to and reliant on assumptions and ideals related to *progress* and *democracy*, the

same ideals that vitalize distinctions of legitimacy and value discussed in the latter half of this chapter. In the case of theoretical analytics such as prudence or publics, these distinctions take center stage in the form of relatively unquestioned demarcations between good rhetoric that serves democratic, progressive ends and behaviors that are to be critiqued or outright denounced. The rhetorical functions of violence throw into relief who and what is excluded from the realm of legitimacy, providing insight into how such exclusion is built into both the rhetorical demands placed on classed populations and rhetorical theory itself. This demonstrates one of the advantages to approaching issues of class as socialized. Analyzing the socialization of class highlights the politics of ideals and focuses attention on how rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control are linked to those ideals in complex ways. In the case of West Virginia and MTR conflicts therein, the ideal of progress is highly political, weaving through the state's history. Focusing on a politically charged phenomenon such as violence helps to discern how certain commitments – noble as they may be – are the product of distributing value in a very particular way. Such commitments miss the forest for the trees, focusing on what is immediate and singular rather than understanding the context around it. In this case, West Virginia populations are devalued and have been through violence. This process relies on the same ideals and practices that undergird rhetorical theory, highlighting the need to examine phenomena such as violence differently.

CHAPTER 5

THE SOCIALIZATION OF CLASS AND THE POLITICS OF PROGRESS

The people of West Virginia are – according to the most recent Gallup-Healthways poll on well-being and happiness – the saddest in the country. The poll measures five criteria used to determine happiness: purpose, social relationships, financial security, community, and physical health. There are, undoubtedly, a variety of factors that contribute to West Virginia's low score; some are obvious from the above analysis. The research director of the study – in grappling for a metanarrative – pointed to the issue of culture:

> Culture is hard to quantify in survey research, but it's very real and very significant," Dan Witters, research director for the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, told The Huffington Post. "If you look at the top states on the list, many of them have a pretty distinct brand and identity about them. I think that unique identity can grease the wheels to having a more unified culture around well-being.
> Perhaps that's why states like Hawaii, known for its welcoming spirit, and Alaska, where people embrace the great outdoors, consistently rank high in the report. Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Minnesota and Utah also earned top ratings. Kentucky and West Virginia were at the bottom of the list, ranking 49th and 50th, respectively. (Herreria, 2016, para. 7–8)

Granted, the states listed at the top have rich cultures that are fundamentally linked to the outdoors, and that probably helps with the kind of happiness and well-being Gallup-Healthways is trying to measure. However, when it comes to the bottom of the list, this speculation might miss the mark. West Virginians have a distinct brand of identity, but it

just might not be the kind that people tend to think about when they load words like *culture* and *identity* with value. It is easy to confuse *no culture* with *obliterated and systematically subordinated culture*. Studies like this are extremely valuable. They make clear what we might implicitly know about downtrodden areas of the country. However, they only tell part of the story, only show us the symptoms and not the disease.

When you drive through West Virginia, you are unlikely to see the effects of MTR. Indeed, you will have to go well out of your way to get a glimpse of any MTR "mine" or the destruction it causes. If you are like me, you will need special directions, further assistance from a not-too-friendly private security guard on the way up the mountain, a willingness to walk past a bunch of signs that say "Do Not Enter," and shoes fit to climb over a pile of rocks stacked along a ridge to catch a real glimpse of what MTR looks like. MTR is out of sight and for many it is out of mind. That is the privilege of those who do not live near the practice. Mining communities, on the other hand, do not have the privilege of thoughtlessly driving past MTR sites. It is in their air and their water. It is in their lungs and their homes. It stares them in the face every day and threatens to annihilate their futures. This underscores the complexity of class in the region. The invisible lines that make up West Virginia and the arbitrary distinctions that make up Appalachia are in some ways products of the same process and world-making trajectories that gave birth to industrialization. The towns and communities hit hardest by industrialization are those that have come to represent West Virginia and Appalachia in the broader American imagination. As a result, the socialization of class in coal communities illuminates part of the more complex socializations of class in West Virginia, which in turn illuminates part of the more complex socialization of class in

Appalachia.

The sort of destruction that comes down on these populations cannot exist in a vacuum. It is licensed by much broader devaluation of the population, socializing practices that frame and forward people and places as disposable, practices that inform political decision-making and that are sutured to the rhetorics of resistance, identity, and control. This is why, despite the heterogeneity of West Virginia and certainly the larger Appalachian region, I have taken MTR conflicts in central and southern West Virginia as a case study to understand how class is socialized in the state and the region more broadly. Certainly, this case does not tell the whole story, but begins to get at some of its most important parts and highlights some of the most pressing challenges it presents.

This project has laid out the way class – as a demarcation of value – is not only manifest in material inequity and economic security and is not merely a matter of stereotypes or common associations, but is also rhetorically manifest. Contemporary class stratification in many ways comes to depend upon its rhetorical dimensions, securing certain populations as less valuable and suturing that value to issues of legitimacy, credibility, proof, and cultural priorities, among other relevant rhetorical phenomena. Those rhetorical dimensions of class are vital, because both the undergirding ethical guidelines of rhetoric and the devaluation of sacrifice zones and populations are crucial to the articulation of contemporary ideals of progress. In turn, as class has rhetorical dimensions, so does rhetoric have class dimensions, often implicitly committed to distinctions, links, aversions, and imperatives that have been used to position and frame particular populations as more or less valuable, and in turn, to socialize class.

In this closing chapter, I will cover how the MTR conflicts in question demonstrate the socialization of class and consequently how the socialization of class provides a useful analytic for thinking about the relationship between class and rhetoric. Each preceding chapter took a step toward recalibrating this relationship, not just to a theoretical end, but as a way of making sense of contemporary conflicts in Appalachia within their historical context. The theoretical and heuristic consequences of this project beg certain questions about class's utility as a concept in 21st-century rhetorical scholarship. Within the menagerie of theorists and ideas that push the field of rhetoric forward, challenges to the teleological commitment to progress as it is articulated with regard to deliberative democracy and capitalism will be, if not the most daring, some of the most exciting and formidable. As a result, the second half of this concluding chapter will outline possible future research in the wake of understanding class as a socialized phenomenon through its relationship with rhetoric discussed here.

An Overview

This project moved in four key stages. First, it outlined key theoretical concerns over class as a demarcation of value. Such a demarcation cannot be reduced to economic security or mobility. Money only tells part – albeit a significant part – of the story. Here, very broadly, class has referred to the way value is manifest in a variety of interwoven ways. I have primarily focused on working- and lower class populations, populations who are devalued through stereotypes, environmental degradation, economic insecurity, and the destruction or appropriation of cultural practices. Manifestations of class are mutually dependent, because each is anchored to the articulation of progress over time.

That is, progress is a term and a concept that is heavily political, used to demarcate populations and forms of life that align with dominant ways of organizing the world from those that serve as foils or cultural outliers. What constitutes the dominant way of organizing the world has many names and comes from no particular source, but rather is most keenly recognized in patterns and relationships, in ways of being affected by the world and the continued reproduction of particular, politically potent relationships. In the contemporary West, and arguably globally, progress is defined through its relationship to deliberative democracy and capitalism. In turn, these two have been key to outlining how salient notions of progress animate the contemporary construction of class and ultimately underscore the relationship between class and rhetoric highlighted here.

MTR practices constitute a key manifestation of class in the world today. It provides a particularly compelling way to look at class as a varied manifestation of value with regard to progress. Not only does MTR bring down extreme pressures and hardships on communities and obliterate mountain environments, it is also one of the newest and most extreme products of industrial progress that highlights how costs disproportionately flow into devalued areas while the benefits disproportionately flow out of the communities, states, and regions where the practice takes place. MTR affects water quality, land fertility, and topography. It decreases populations and job opportunities. It threatens human and wildlife populations. The process is extremely harmful to the land and the people who find themselves unfortunately near a MTR mine. This reflects a variety of ever-growing rifts and demonstrates the devaluation of the land and its people. However, MTR was not sprung on these communities suddenly. It is just the latest phase in coal's long history in West Virginia, and Appalachia more broadly, a

long history to which the practice and contemporary conflicts over it are deeply indebted.

The next stage of this project focused strategically on the history of coal in West Virginia and how the coal industry has been a crucial part of the evolution of the state's political climate, as well as the establishment of working- and lower class West Virginians as less valuable in the broader American imagination. The industry and its growth are sutured in a variety of ways to the development of culturally salient stereotypes about Appalachians, and West Virginians more specifically. The history of coal mining and how it developed over time in West Virginia is important, because part of the coal industry's growth hinged on creating a dependent population in the region and cultivating it as a sacrifice zone more broadly. A careful discussion of key historical events, patterns, and coal mining practices throws into relief how industrialization simultaneously articulated contemporary notions of progress (Eller, 1982, 2008) and created populations that were treated, and ultimately mediated, as less valuable. They were part of the decentered patterns and orientations of industrial capitalism. Various mediations of and about Appalachian populations tapped into and even helped create stereotypes about these populations. Because the Appalachian Mountains were – from very early on – positioned as part of the cultural backwater in America, and because poverty has long been seen as a national ill that needs curing, mediations of isolated mountain communities increased in frequency and intensity during economic decline. As a result, many poor and working-class people in the region intersected with the American imagination when they were at their most despondent, most in line with the notion of the Appalachian *hillbilly* as the antithesis of the dream of progress.

Contemporary conflicts between mining companies and grassroots activists exist

within this context. They are the product of the dynamics between oppressed mining communities and industrialization. This project focused on Massey Energy and Coal River Mountain Watch as exemplars of how the coal industry benefits and evolves from these dynamics. Grassroots organizations, particularly during the time in question, emerged in response to the continued devaluation of sacrifice zones and increasing abandonment from unions and the state. Many of the key events and points of conflict among the coal industry, the state, and anti-MTR activists serve both to frame the historical and contemporary context within which the rhetorical patterns being analyzed exist, and to further highlight the manifestations of value (or lack thereof) that ground the notions of class operating here.

An analysis of how the coal industry has become the cultural center of West Virginia, particularly as it pertains to rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control with regards to MTR practices, followed this discussion of key events and patterns. MTR practices provide a compelling case for understanding how the rhetorics over specific conflicts reflect cultural commitments more broadly for three reasons. First, MTR accelerates various rifts that are indicative of the devaluation of West Virginia more broadly, outside of coal country. Additionally, many of the appeals both for and against MTR rely on assertions about the state's culture and values, and are not isolated to coal communities. This demonstrates how the ideologies supported by coal culture encourage populations to actually advocate for their own or their neighbors' marginalization. This section details the varied ways appeals to the importance of MTR as a practice rely on the idea that coal is central to the state, more so than they rely on the economic or environmental benefits of large-scale surface mining. Finally, the cultivation of the

state's coal culture depends on a variety of dynamics and patterns that were the product of coal's evolving dominance in the state. Particular among these phenomena are the use of grassroots as well as traditional public relations tactics, the establishment and maintenance of traditional gender roles that encourage dependent masculinity and also privilege a singular male breadwinner, the exploitation of insider/outsider distinctions, and the assertion that coal is the only way to make a livable wage in certain parts of West Virginia. Each depends heavily on the links, dynamics, and relationships that were born through the industrialization of West Virginia's coal-rich mountains. This section demonstrates how rhetorics of control depend heavily upon, and in turn perpetuate, the socialization of class as it is built into the way issues of credibility as well as the very logic on which proMTR arguments are based. In turn, this chapter details the rhetorical dimensions of class through specific tactics and rhetorical episodes.

These dimensions create particular hurdles for activists fighting MTR. The assertion that MTR is destroying the state's land and harming its people is not enough. Even the evidence that dependence on mining is bad for the state's economy and has contributed to poverty in coal-rich communities is not the weighty argument one might expect it to be. Activists must fight MTR at a variety of levels, not the least of which targets the rhetorical construction of the state's coal culture. AntiMTR voices – from the CRMW and otherwise – answer the abovementioned articulations of the state's coal culture, attempting to forward different constellations of value. That is, this project focuses on how activists formally and informally face the challenge of overcoming the state's coal culture and the socialization of class it perpetuates, as well as the specific ways such activists rhetorically present those challenges.

The final stage of this project discusses violence as a way of demonstrating the complexities of class in this context, and how this orientation to class challenges some of the most basic commitments in rhetorical theory. An analysis of the rhetorical functions of violence, using the heuristic theoretical analytics of prudence and publics, accomplishes this. It simultaneously demonstrates how violence can function rhetorically and works to highlight the politics of violence as the perceived antithesis to progress. The first task of this final section is to parse out how violence is used to socialize particular populations as less valuable and in turn how the politics of violence disproportionately and negatively affects working- and lower class communities. Because particular populations are demarcated and in some cases devalued based on their forms of life, as well as their perceptual orientations to the world and how they respond to it, class is built into rhetoric in a way that sometimes reinforces class dynamics. The reading of violence as a way of both socializing class and challenging that process sheds light on how violence is securely positioned as the antithesis of progress in the context of deliberative democracy. This is a positioning with exceptional political weight.

Violence can provide compelling challenges to the state's coal culture, as well as create binds that cause activists to perpetuate stereotypes of the backwards, less valuable Appalachian hillbilly. It can provide unique opportunities to rearticulate the state's history and the dynamics of value therein, as well as renegotiate gender ideals. The key here is that violence functions in a variety of rhetorical ways in this context, reflecting how aversions to violence work to perpetuate associations and articulations that are foundational to the socialization of class.

This type of analysis of violence and its rhetorical function also serves to

highlight the politics of excluding violence in rhetorical theory. Rhetoric's commitment to deliberative democracy and the ideals of progress associated with it often lead theoretical development to implicitly and explicitly privilege a notion of rhetorical engagement juxtaposed to violence. This moralistic orientation to rhetoric – or what constitutes good or acceptable rhetoric – relies heavily on a narrowing of violence, on a singular focus on subjective violence that narrows what constitutes violence into a singular form to the exclusion of practices, habits, orientations, and institutions that do violence on a massive scale in the name of capitalism and democracy (see Badiou, 2012; DeLuca, 2013; Foucault, 1977; Rand, 2009; Vivian, 2013; Žižek, 2008). This chapter analyzes the varied rhetorical effects of violence as a way of broadening and diversifying the relationship between violence and rhetoric. That process demonstrates not only the futility of maintaining the distinction between rhetoric and violence, but also its dangers. To approach the conflicts in question with a well-meaning aversion to violence would be to perpetuate articulations that have been fundamental to the socialization of class in the region, articulations that condemn the violence of working- and lower class populations and celebrate the violence of industrial capitalism, and in turn the politics of progress.

This project has attempted not only to forward a different orientation to the relationship between class and rhetoric – one that sees the two as intertwined and in some ways mutually dependent in the contemporary world – but also to demonstrate how this orientation produces an analysis of class. Class is not merely a context within which rhetoric exists. It is not just the tropes used to frame and make sense of certain populations or the material conditions of economic disparity, hidden beneath the veil of rhetoric. It is not just a condition that people speak to, from, and about. Class is actively

formed and negotiated in the world-making process. It exists in a symbiotic relationship with rhetoric insofar as rhetoric – in theory and practice – is indebted to governing ideals of progress, an ideal articulated over time to hold up institutions, industries, and commitments to deliberative democracy and industrial capitalism. Class cannot be understood outside of its relationship to progress. Its concrete manifestations and its ideological binds are woven together through the articulation of progress and commitments to it.

Rhetoric as a theoretical field, and the world-making practices it attempts to understand and mirror, has also been deeply indebted to these commitments for generations. This project underscores the politics of progress as it cultivates a landscape where rhetorics depend on and perpetuate the omnipresent devaluation of a particular population, devaluation necessary for the growth and prosperity of industries such as coal. It is no secret that Appalachian populations suffer the plight of living in a sacrifice zone. Nor is it a secret that these populations are othered and silenced in American culture broadly. That is not news; however, I have attempted to focus on the communicative dynamics of that process as a way of inviting a recalibration of the relationship between rhetoric and class. It is my hope that this hones in on the politics of progress in both theory and practice in a way that sheds light on the complexity of the fight activists face.

Bringing Class Back

This project seeks not to replace other treatments of class or to act as a critic-on-high removed assessment of West Virginia or Appalachian politics and conflicts. Rather,

it is a modest step – neither the first nor the last – toward understanding the conflicts in question and (re)establishing class as a crucial discussion, particularly for rhetorical scholars. What is new is the focus on what conflicts reveal about the relationship between class and rhetoric. Through this focus, I contend this project presents three interrelated and heuristically valuable strengths. Each comes with its own set of potential paths for future work.

The first goal of this project is to provide a complex understanding of MTR conflicts from a communicative perspective. It functions to complement the varied and rich body of research that is currently grappling with MTR conflicts and simultaneously struggling to expand the breadth and depth of knowledge about the issue. Much of that work has been cited here. Scholars from across disciplines, from history (Eller, 1982, 2008; Gaventa, 1982; Trotter, 1990) to journalism (Shnayerson, 2008) to sociology (Burns, 2005) to gender studies and environmental justice (Barry, 2008, 2012) and many more have grappled with the issue of MTR and the challenges it presents Appalachian communities. New book-length studies on the issue are being published at an impressive rate.[14] This project draws heavily from these sources in an attempt to build upon the work they have done, to make sense of not only how the current situation has come to be, but also how it can be and is being changed. Rhetoric as a discipline – and communication studies more generally – provides exceptional tools for gaining insight into such conflicts. Those tools should be brought to the table.

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[14] Particularly I would draw the reader's attention to Shannon Elizabeth Bell's forthcoming and very exciting book titled *Fighting King Coal: The Challenges to Micromobilization in Central Appalachia* (2016). Bell has been one of the most important scholarly voices on the issue of MTR, and her forthcoming book represents a compelling attempt to explore and theorize the dynamics of mobilization (and lack thereof) against the coal industry.

While West Virginia and Appalachia more broadly are not unique in being exploited and marginalized for corporate gain, the specific history of the region and the various communities within help shed light on the ever-evolving mechanisms of exploitation and class. More importantly, they highlight a strand and history of resistance that is – I believe – still underexplored and undertheorized with regard to expanding political and theoretical approaches to resistance and social justice. Activists in this region are – as demonstrated here – fighting their devaluation on a number of levels and using the particular constellation of values in Appalachia as sources of strength. For example, the "Occupy Century" movement saw 60-, 70-, and 80-year-old retirees occupy the entrance of an aluminum plant during the dead of winter to protest Century Aluminum's decision to take retirement benefits away from employees (Fassinger, 2013; Gerard, 2012). These retirees used their elderly bodies to challenge Century Aluminum and make the violence of company decisions material. Cases like this must be considered within the context of rural Appalachia's industrial history and with a careful understanding of how violence can function in a variety of complex ways. Considering marginalization here in terms of the socialization of class, and consequently with an eye on how the rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control are related to the achievement of class over time, does not just provide a richer understanding of what is happening in the case study, it also further illuminates the varied ways progress affects populations, and in turn, the way populations respond to and challenge progress.

This ushers in the second benefit of this project. The focus on Appalachian politics and the cultivation of class therein highlights a form and history of exploitation that has been categorically absent in rhetorical scholarship. Appalachia is well

documented as a sacrifice zone. Its people have long been understood as culturally marginalized in America. However, despite the powerful thread of social justice issues and identity politics in rhetoric, Appalachia remains conspicuous by its absence, particularly with regard to class. West Virginia specifically has been the subject of two noteworthy articles, one on the racial dimensions of discourses following a murder in the state (Moon & Nakayama, 2005) and the other focused on traditional tropes used to explain community members and their responses following a mining disaster (Kitch, 2007). Both are compelling pieces of scholarship, but neither provide nor claim to provide a prioritized attention to class politics in the region. While the state is not necessarily more or less special than any other, West Virginia presents compelling opportunities for rhetorical scholars, particularly those interested in class and/or violence, to think about class in new and challenging ways.

A serious and sustained effort within rhetoric to struggle with issues of class in the Appalachian region is needed. However, as David Zarfsky (1998) astutely pointed out, just because scholars have not talked about something does not mean they should. I have attempted to identify here some of the key reasons scholars interested in class *should* attend carefully to rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control with regard to MTR in West Virginia. This type of research particularly would complement the growing interest in environmental justice in rhetoric. Environmental justice is an approach to environmental concerns that focuses on the link between social justice and the environment. Populations with the least political voice are often at the greatest risk of being faced with environmental degradation, because these populations typically have less community awareness and are slower/less capable of mobilizing political force

against companies trying to improve their bottom line (Faber, 1998). Such populations, typically stratified most obviously along lines of class or race, are often confronted with toxic materials as a regular part of their day-to-day lives (Pezzullo, 2007). According to Robert Bullard (2001), environmental justice work "attempts to uncover the underlying assumptions that may contribute to and produce unequal protection" (p. 153) from environmental degradation and destruction. As has been discussed here, mining communities face a variety of environmental threats, but those threats cannot be detached from the way class distinctions and stratification have been achieved in the region over time, from the practices, mediations, and ideals that position and articulate working- and lower-class populations as less valuable. This orientation to class can and should complement environmental justice scholarship (among other subdisciplines). First, environmental justice scholars are grappling with one of the key manifestations of class in America and a key factor in the socialization of class in Appalachia. Additionally, environmental justice scholarship has become increasingly focused on issues of race over class. A recalibration of the relationship between rhetoric and class provides a chance to bring class into further, rejuvenated focus and makes new avenues available for discussing the intersections of race and class in environmental issues.

Primary among the reasons rhetoricians should attend carefully to the socialization of class in Appalachia are the key links to teleological commitments to progress that also undergird the development of rhetorical theory and the broad rhetorical ebbs and flows it attempts to account for. While such commitments may be well meaning and might even be absolutely necessary in certain contexts, they are not without political consequence. This project has demonstrated this fact of consequence through an

analysis of the rhetorical effects of violence and a reflection on how that analysis forces rhetorical theory to think beyond the commitments to progress and to challenge the associations such commitments are built on. Analyzing the socialization of class does not beg questions for questions' sake, but explores the question of value through rhetorics of identity, resistance, and control, as well as the practices, institutions, events, industries, political structures, and mediation patterns they are indebted to. It does not take classism as a taken-for-granted reality, but outlines its manifestations and its varied rhetorical dimensions.

If class is socialized in West Virginia and Appalachia more broadly, it is undoubtedly also socialized in other regions around the world, each likely sharing qualities with what is outlined here, as well as the product of their own unique dynamics. As this project only tells part of the story with regard to Appalachia, it only tells part of the story with regard to how the socialization of class functions and what it means for rhetoricians. As always, more work remains to be done. Countless scholars – many of whom have been important in particular rhetorical circles – have challenged particular constructions of progress, scholars such as Foucault (1972, 1977, 1982, 1984), Derrida (1978, 1995) Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze, 1995), Said (1979, 1983), Badiou (2006, 2009, 2010, 2012), Alcoff (2006), and Fanon (1968), to name only a handful who have inspired this project. Rhetoricians have echoed these challenges in a variety of ways (see for example Biesecker, 1992; DeLuca, 1999, 2010, 2013; Ono & Sloop, 1995, 1999; Phillips, 1996; Sloop & Ono, 1997; Vivian, 2000, 2004). Still, a continued and explicit challenge to the politics of progress is needed to prevent rhetoric from becoming a domesticated discipline. The socialization of class forwards one way of

continuing that mission, a way that can be applicable in a variety of diverse contexts.

West Virginians – and more generally Appalachians – are not the first and will not be the last people in a resource-rich region to experience the violence of exploitation. The people in coal country are not the first or only people to be oppressed by the violence of progress. The relative success of their activists in chipping away at the power of the coal industry is not the most shining or sexy example of activists overcoming the odds. *MTR conflicts in West Virginia are not unique, and that is their value.* What has happened and continues to happen in West Virginia's coal country and the state more broadly happens all over the world. West Virginia and the MTR conflicts therein provide a compelling entry point and catalyst to think about the relationship between rhetoric and class differently. That relationship is fundamental to analyzing and understanding contemporary conflicts over practices such as MTR, but it is also fundamental to understanding the politics of progress and its deeply rooted consequences for rhetoric.

Progress is great, until it is not. It is built on the backs of working-class people, and many of those people live and have lived in the hills and hollers of West Virginia. It is easy to recognize that these people are exploited. It is much more difficult to recognize that the commitments to ideals held on high in our culture and privileged mightily in the halls of our academic institutions do not merely license that exploitation, but require it. To think of class as socialized provides one analytic for (re)examining the relationship between rhetoric and class, to make clear how progress is not just a harmless abstract, but a real actor in the world, articulated in practices that require populations and lands that are categorically devalued. West Virginia is a beautiful place and the butt of a lot of jokes. The jokes are not the problem. If anyone can take a joke it is the people of West

Virginia. The problem is that the jokes come from the same historical dynamics that license the land and the people to be destroyed in a process that increasingly lacks subtlety. The destruction is starting to overshadow the beauty. The process and practices that got us here need to be carefully considered, primarily as they affect the way these conflicts are debated and negotiated today. New constellations of value can and are being forwarded, and they must be constantly championed if they are to have a weighty impact. Activists and some scholars are doing this work. It is up to rhetoricians and students of rhetoric – if they are to keep pace with the world today – to understand the complexity of these crucial conflicts and, if they are so inclined, to champion these alternative constellations of value in their own modest ways.

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